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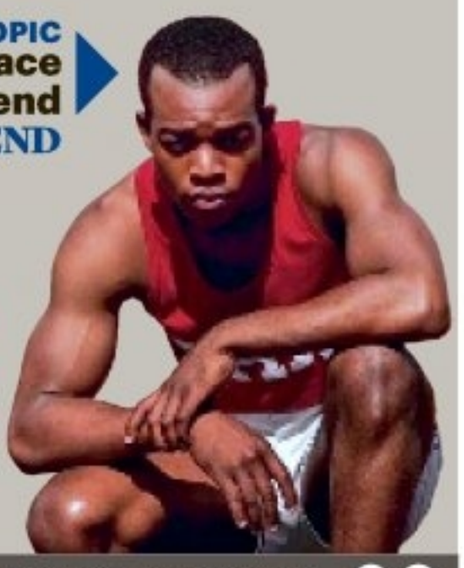

John Olson of New York shows off his new 3D printing technology allowing the blind to "see" photographs and fine art with their fingertips at The Canadian Museum for Human Rights.
JOHN WOODS/THE CANADIAN PRESS

New exhibit sets sights on breaking down stereotypes

metroNEWS

Shoal Lake to address the UN

HUMAN RIGHTS

First Nation reserve looks to mend water crisis

Austin Grabish
For Metro

Two members of Shoal Lake 40 First Nation will have the chance Monday to have their say in front of the United Nations.

Linda Redsky says she and another band member will help give a presentation on the living conditions on her reserve, specifically focusing on the community's lack of water access.

The group Human Rights Watch will be speaking in front of the UN committee on economic, social and cultural rights. The committee is reviewing Canada's human rights track record, and Redsky will be joining the group.

Shoal Lake, which lies on the Ontario-Manitoba border, provides the City of Winnipeg with clean drinking water, but has been under a boil-water advisory itself for nearly two decades and is cut off from the mainland.

A copy of the Human Rights Watch report, obtained by Metro, says Canada is struggling to fulfill its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Shoal Lake 40 Chief Erwin Redsky said he hopes the UN visit will shine a light on the condition of all Canadian First Nations.

> The world leaders need to know what's going on in Canada.
> Erwin Redsky

"It's very frustrating living in Canada," he said. "You see and hear (we're) one of the richest countries in the world and yet our own people, our own original people of this land, are forced to live in Third World conditions."

More on Shoal Lake, page 5

Birchwood KIA ON REGENT
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Shooting in the North

Community is the key

METRO'S ARCTIC ADVENTURE

Braeden Jones
Metro | Winnipeg

Metro asks two photographers about experience in the Arctic

The high Arctic provides a canvas with which photographers can illustrate the essence of the "true north" inherent to the Canadian cultural identity, but it's also truly challenging for them to work in.

Two professional photographers based out of Winnipeg accompanied the Arctic Response Company Group (ARCG) on exercise Arctic Ram in Resolute Bay this week, and Metro asked them about their perspective on the double hook of photography in the north.

Members of 3rd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry prepare to operate in the high Arctic after a parachute drop during Exercise ARCTIC RAM 2016 near Resolute Bay, Nunavut, on February 12. LOUIS BRUNET/CONTRIBUTED

Joe Kerr, freelance nature and wildlife photographer

Professional experience: I've been a professional photographer for 20 years. I started shooting professionally in 1996.

Northern shooting experience: I guess it depends what you classify as North. I've shot in Churchill; that used to be North (to me), but now it's not really that far.

Arctic Ram goals: Just trying to get images that were representative of the North, so the snowy barren landscapes, amazing sun possibilities and star possibilities at night that you can only see above the Arctic Circle.

Risks: The biggest challenge is the weather, there's no question… In the short amount of time you're (able to be) outside, you realize how cold it is, and your gear is jeopardized because of the cold.

Battery life in your camera is shortened, although if we just shoot around (the arctic training centre) it's fine, but once we get out into the field we understand we've really got to pamper our equipment because it doesn't last long in the Arctic.

Reward: I'm a nature and wildlife photographer. That's my passion. I'm shooting in an environment I'm not really familiar with in shooting documentary for the troops, (but) I'm starting to discover my own (opportunities) as I do shoots here, and getting scenic and things like that.

M.Cpl Louis Brunet, military photographer

Professional experience: I've been a professional photographer since 2007, since I transferred from my old trade (reserve military police).

Northern shooting experience: This was my first experience here this far North, it (gave) us the chance to test our equipment for the extreme cold.

Arctic Ram goals: Artistically I wanted to be able to get some of the sun dogs that we see in the cold weather like that, unique to the north mainly. The kind of style I'm shooting is always including the sun… I like shooting into the sun.

Risks: With all of the white snow we have the challenge (of) getting good details on our subject, good colours… For myself the main challenge is to keep warm, (because) we need dexterity. And we need equipment that's going to hold up. The batteries are running out in the cold so what I'm doing is removing the battery from my camera, placing it in my glove so it keeps warm against my palm.

Reward: Doing photography for the Canadian Forces is making history for the future… Here we want to provide and showcase our capability to deploy in the North. It's completely different up here, shooting new stuff. It's a challenge no matter where you're going, here the big difference for me is that it's just colder and that's it.

The Canadian Armed Forces Arctic Training Centre (ATC) mandate is to increase capacity and preparedness for response to sovereign threats in the high Arctic, but its priority is to exist symbiotically in the northern community without interfering.

Lieutenant Clayton Erickson said including the community of Resolute and locals in exercise planning is "one extra check in the box."

Erickson's role at the ATC is acting as a liaison officer for the military's Joint Task Force North (JTFN), the point of contact between the armed forces and the area's inhabitants, government and police.

In planning and carrying out exercises on Little Cornwallis Island he said working collaboratively is key.

"It's not just the immediate area of Resolute that's very important to the Resolute population, because a lot of the locals rely quite heavily on hunting and fishing," he said.

"So before an operation takes place there are a lot of steps that we do to make sure that we're not impacting negatively on those activities."

For Exercise Arctic Ram, about 120 members of the armed forces are snowmobiling and operating in the tundra and on sea ice Northwest of Resolute. Their route avoids and respects hunting and fishing areas, and their supply planes fly at a certain altitude "so as not to scare wildlife."

Erickson said it's about "a deep understanding of the importance the hunting and fishing plays to the Inuit communities, and understanding the long term impact that can have on everything from migration to the next year's successful hunt."

Beyond ensuring no negative effects from military operations, Erickson makes sure that the resources and manpower of the ATC and JTFN is available to the community in the case of any emergency.

BRAEDEN JONES/METRO

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Bailey Kliewer, 19, Bradley Rochelle, 19, and Hannah Kahler, 19, went door-to-door handing out flyers with **Cooper Nemeth's photo.** BAILEY HILDEBRAND FOR METRO

Potential sighting sparks teen search

DISAPPEARANCE

Volunteers join in the hope of finding missing Cooper Nemeth

Volunteers and police are expanding their search for Cooper Nemeth after a possible sighting Wednesday night near Siloam Mission.

Cooper, 17, has been missing since early Sunday morning after he left a house party in the Valley Gardens area.

Bradley Rochelle, 19, is the assistant coach for the River East Marauders — Cooper's AA hockey team.

Rochelle and two friends, Bailey Kliewer, 19, and Hannah Kahler, 19, went door-to-door with flyers along Dollard Boulevard in St. Boniface Thursday afternoon.

The group said they knew Cooper from when they went to River East Collegiate.

"My brothers played (hockey) with him for around four years," Rochelle said. "He's a funny guy. He's in the dressing room laughing. High-spirited, he's a good hockey player, he's polite."

Two women, Gail McMillan-Law and Traci Libitka, were also searching a few blocks away on Aulneau Street. Both said they didn't know Cooper, but they wanted to help a fellow hockey family.

McMillan-Law said she has three sons who all play hockey.

"I'd just hope people would come out and help if my child were in trouble," she said. "I can't even imagine what it would feel like if it would happen to me.

"I just feel for the parents and the family and for him. I hope everything is okay and I hope that they find him as soon as possible."

Winnipeg police have moved their search for Cooper north of the Perimeter Highway near Henderson Highway. Ground search and rescue crews are there along with volunteers.

Search coordinators have been stationed at Gateway Recreation Centre assigning neighbourhoods to volunteers who are searching in Transcona, St. Boniface and the downtown area. Cooper's family says the search will continue throughout the weekend if needed.

Some people are even handing out flyers with Cooper's photo in rural communities like Lockport and Selkirk.

Cooper is described as white, 6-feet tall with an average build. He has short brown hair and brown eyes.

He was last wearing a black jacket with a River East Marauders logo, black pants and brown runners.

BAILEY HILDEBRAND/METRO

> **I just feel for the parents and the family and for him.**
> Gail McMillan-Law

CRIME

Life sentence for guilty Brine

Thomas Brine was sentenced to life in prison Thursday after a jury found him guilty of first-degree murder in the death of 73-year-old Elizabeth Lafantaisie.

Lafantaisie was killed in a parking garage five years ago. Her body was found stuffed in the trunk of her vehicle abandoned in Osborne Village.

Key evidence against Brine was DNA found in semen from an internal swab during the autopsy.

Brine's defence lawyer suggested the DNA could have gotten there by accident when he was rooting around in the vehicle.

Brine admitted stealing the vehicle but insisted he hadn't killed the senior and was surprised to open the trunk and find the body.

The Crown said the charge of first-degree murder was appropriate because Lafantaisie was also sexually assaulted.

In addition to being raped and strangled, Lafantaisie had broken bones in her leg and neck. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Linda Redsky is photographed at Shoal Lake First Nation in 2015. JOHN WOODS/THE CANADIAN PRESS

UN to hear plight of Shoal Lake

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Community member to join watchdog in Geneva Monday

Austin Grabish
For Metro | Winnipeg

Linda Redsky is packing her bags, leaving her isolated community, and preparing to share the plight of Shoal Lake 40 on the world stage.

Redsky and possibly a second band member will join Human Rights Watch at the United Nations in Geneva on Monday as the rights watchdog presents a report detailing its preliminary findings on Shoal Lake 40 and three other Ontario reserves.

The presentation will be made to the UN committee on economic, social and cultural rights, which is reviewing Canada's track record on human rights.

> **They are struggling in Canada to vindicate their basic human rights.**
> Amanda Klasing

The group started investigating living conditions on Shoal Lake, Neskantaga, Batchewana, and Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, last year after Shoal Lake started making headlines.

The reserve, which lies on the Ontario-Manitoba border, provides the City of Winnipeg with clean drinking water, but has been under a boil-water advisory itself for nearly two decades and is cut off from the mainland.

Redsky, 55, has fallen through an ice road while trying to cross into the community during the winter, and recently had to temporarily relocate off-reserve to Kenora, Ont. so her foster son could attend high school.

She said she's seen the plight of her community get worse over the years "as I've watched the people continue to go across."

"I've seen vehicles going through. The loss of life," she said.

Redsky said the boil-water advisory has made it almost impossible to bathe on the island.

"My boy, for instance, he's got eczema and I have to take him off the community just to go bathe him in clean water," she said.

A copy of the Human Rights Watch report, obtained by Metro, says Canada is struggling to fulfill its obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Human Rights Watch senior researcher Amanda Klasing said the boil-water advisory on Shoal Lake is an example of how aboriginal people living on reserve lack the same protections other Canadians enjoy.

"Let it be known that they are struggling in Canada to vindicate their basic human rights including access to clean water and sanitation," Klasing wrote in an email.

Klasing said Human Rights Watch will release a full report on its findings later this year.

PREMATURE BIRTH

Valentine's Day baby born into toilet

Babies aren't always born in a hospital, and sometimes they arrive on a faster timeline than parents expect. But being born in a toilet on Valentine's Day? That's a shocker.

Joanne Fontaine and Flinn Dorion of Winnipeg weren't expecting for another six weeks when little Christopher decided he wasn't waiting any longer.

Fontaine says she thought she simply had to go to the washroom but as soon as she sat down her water broke.

She could feel the baby's head so she told Dorion to call 911, but before the ambulance could get there, their son plopped out and into the toilet.

Dorion admits he was taken aback and didn't know what to do at first, but then he reached in and plucked out his boy and quickly began to clean him off.

Being premature, Christopher is small and is being monitored at the neonatal intensive care unit at Health Sciences Centre, but overall he is healthy.

"I feel good; I'm in love with him," says Fontaine.

The couple hopes to take baby Christopher home when he gets closer to his original due date in March.

"The Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service is pleased to have played a part in this safe and happy out-of-hospital delivery," says fire chief John Lane.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Newborn Christopher rests with his mother Joanne Fontaine. FACEBOOK

Acrobatic delights

The Guizhou Culture Exchange Performing Troupe will help Winnipeg celebrate Chinese New Year with a show at Pantages Playhouse Theatre Saturday. The group arrived Wednesday and gave a sneak peak on Thursday at the Best Western Plus Winnipeg Airport Hotel. METRO

1 A group of women performs a traditional dance of the Yi ethnic group from China.

2 Zhongying Wu, one of the acrobatic ballet performers, shows off her flexibility.

3 Guangyou Han keeps his balance as he holds Zhongying Wu above his head in an intense ballet performance.

4 Ruyu Zhao plays a song on the pipa, a Chinese stringed instrument.

ALL PHOTOS: BAILEY HILDEBRAND/FOR METRO

DONALD STREET

Heritage values disputed

Stephanie Taylor
Metro | Winnipeg

Adding three more historic buildings to Winnipeg's crop of heritage properties is a question that has yet again been set in motion at City Hall.

The historical buildings and resources committee recommended Thursday that three Donald Street properties — the Aldous Building and its annex, as well as the Phoenix Block — all on the edge of the Exchange District, be designated with heritage status.

The problem, however, is that according to forms submitted by the property owners to the city, they do not want the buildings designated.

"It really had no real historical value," a comment signed by Phoenix Building owner Bernard Cheater reads.

Cindy Tugwell, executive director of Heritage Winnipeg, calls the owners' reluctance "disconcerting."

"The fundamental reason for designation is to protect the building in its entirety, so it's not demolished," she said Thursday.

Tugwell added a second reason is to ensure buildings are properly maintained to avoid the fate of "demolition by neglect."

For buildings like these that lie on outskirts of the Exchange District — a national historic site — she said a non-designation is effectively "eroding the streetscape."

"You're going against the very grain of what the national historic designation is about."

For Coun. Jenny Gerbasi who sits on the committee, she says "there seems to be a lot of evidence of their value," pointing to the buildings' surroundings.

Super recycling depot opens

ENVIRONMENT

New facility at landfill cost $5.2 million

Stephanie Taylor
Metro | Winnipeg

The long awaited recycling depot at the Brady landfill is finally open for business.

Several Winnipeg councillors and city staff unveiled the new $5.2 million facility Thursday, which was followed by a site tour of where residents can now drop off a variety of oversized recyclable and reusable items free of charge.

> **Yes, it cost more than we thought. But it is an important facility.**
> Coun. Brian Mayes

Coun. Brian Mayes, chairperson of the city's committee on water and waste, said despite a three-year delay in the depot's opening, it is still a crucial part of the city's role in reducing green house gas emissions at the landfill.

"Yes, this took longer than we thought. Yes, it cost more than we thought. But it is an important facility," he said Thursday.

"It'll give people way more opportunity to recycle."

When residents enter the Brady Road Resource Management Facility to use the depot, they will be directed to a line of 17 bins where to dispose of their waste.

The depot will collect a variety of items, from classic recyclables and yard waste to old electronics and tires, as well as scrap metal and bicycles.

"It's main purpose is just to provide residents a better experience when they come to this facility to dispose their waste properly, and to divert some of their waste that's currently going into the landfill," Randy Park, the city's supervisor of waste diversion, said Thursday.

One of the first citizens to use the depot on Thursday. STEPHANIE TAYLOR/METRO

Although he couldn't say precisely what he expects the uptick to be, he said the landfill services roughly 100,000 area residents.

The opening of the depot means the end of residential access to the landfill, Parks said Thursday, pointing to the site's seven garbage bins.

Unlike recycling drop-offs that are free of charge, there is a minimum $15 charge or $61 per tonne for garbage.

LAWSUIT

Winnipeg winter festival sued over 12-year-old girl's injury on snow slide

A family is suing Festival du Voyageur, a 10-day annual winter festival in Winnipeg, after their daughter was seriously injured on a snow slide in 2014.

The lawsuit alleges the 12-year-old girl was ejected from her sled and propelled into the air, hitting her head and tailbone on an ice path.

The suit alleges she sustained a brain injury that left her with misaligned eyes, depression and anxiety. Her parents, Lynne and Raymond Comeault, are accusing the festival of negligence for failing to require safety equipment and failing to adequately supervise patrons among other things.

The lawsuit says the girl missed the remainder of her grade seven year at school, and had minimal participation in her grade eight and nine years.

Officials at Festival du Voyageur said they are unable to comment on the incident as court proceedings are currently pending. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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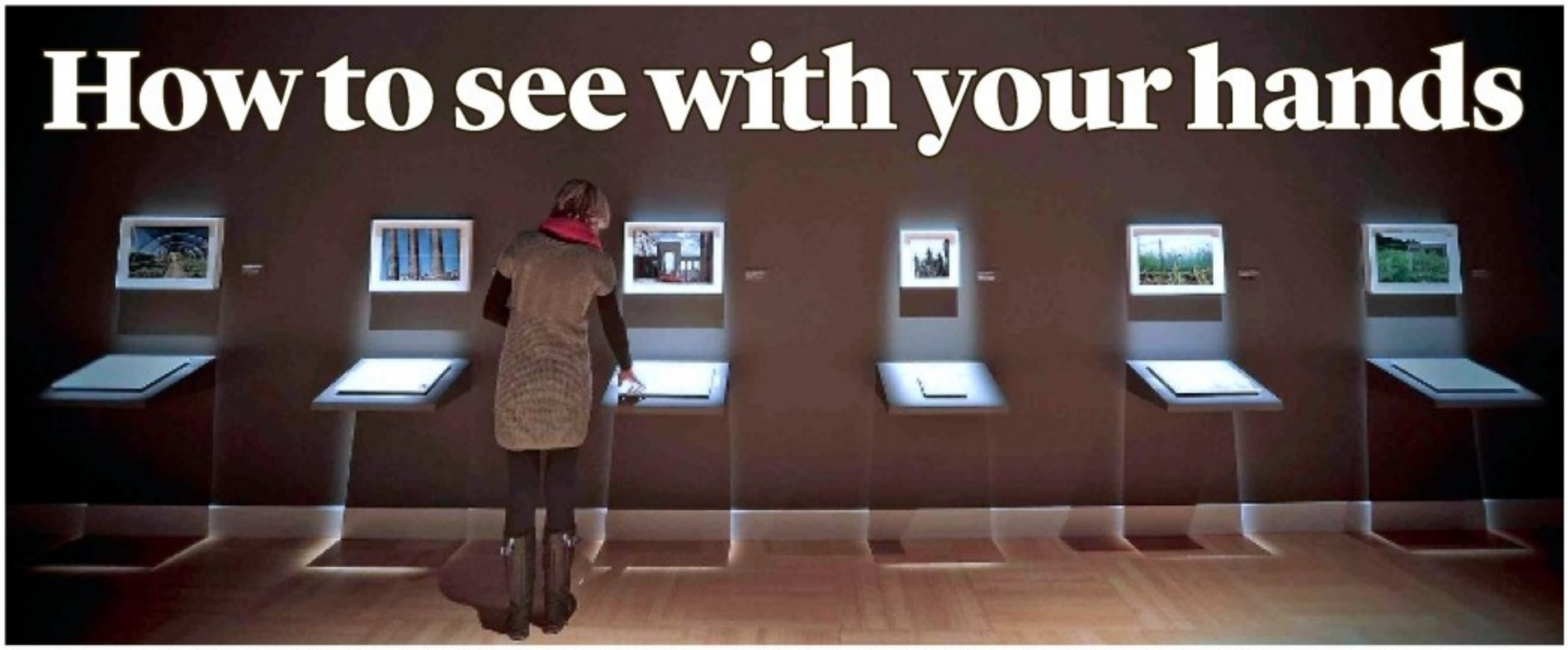

Rosita McKenzie photographs and Camilla Adams raised ink illustrations are on display as part of Sight Unseen: International Photography by Blind Artists. PHOTOS BY JOHN WOODS/THE CANADIAN PRESS

HUMAN RIGHTS MUSEUM

Collection of work by blind photographers exposes talent

When amateur photographer Tara Miller lost most of her vision in high school, she did what most people would expect — she put her camera away.

It wasn't until years later that Miller picked up a camera again and discovered a much richer experience. She used her keen hearing, the feeling of the lens focusing on a subject and even her sense of smell to frame an image.

"When I'm composing an image, I'm not really using my eyesight," said Miller, now a professional commercial photographer in Winnipeg.

"There's no difference with us being visually impaired or legally blind photographers. If we're comfortable in what we're shooting, we're going to get that same result as someone who's fully sighted."

Blind photographers like Miller are hoping a new exhibit at Winnipeg's Canadian Museum for Human Rights, opening to the public this weekend and running until September, will help showcase talent and break down stereotypes surrounding the visually impaired.

The exhibit entitled "Sight Unseen: International Photography by Blind Artists" features over 100 works but also uses 3-D technology to allow those with vision loss to feel some select photos with their fingertips while touch sensors in the prints set off descriptive audio.

One photographer's work is embedded with braille while another's is accompanied by a topographical printout of the photo, which can be touched by visitors.

New 3D printing technology is on display as part of the exhibit.

"It does a great job of expanding the perception, the expectations and preconceived biases that people would have," said Corey Timpson, the museum's vice-president of exhibitions, research and design.

"The more people can be exposed to this, the more there's just a general awareness."

Pete Eckert didn't turn to photography seriously until after he completely lost his sight. He picked up an old mechanical camera from the 1960s and started taking pictures. He uses a long exposure and a series of flashlights to create a fiery silhouette around his subject.

Like Miller, he relies on his hearing and other senses to immerse himself in his work. If anything, Eckert said he is more in synch with his subjects and medium than before.

"You can't see behind your head so we're all visually impaired. When I had vision, I had 210 degrees of vision," said the California-based photographer, whose work is featured in the exhibit.

"Using sound, you hear the world in 360 degrees."

Eckert never gets to see his finished prints. For him, the art form is in the "event" of taking the photo.

"I say I build photos," he said. "Your brain, especially your imagination, fills in the gaps that you can't see. So I'm basically investigating the world like a baby learns to see."

Eckert, a trained martial artist who used to spar against opponents using sound, said he hopes the exhibit challenges people to think about the concept of ability. If people look at his work and wonder "How did he do that?" Eckert said perhaps they will question what other talents blind people may have.

"I'd like them to question their own assumptions of what they think — not only blind people can do — but all disabled people."

Pete Haertel, a legally blind professional pet photographer in Winnipeg, said people are constantly surprised at his work. The exhibit is a chance for people to see beyond the white cane or guide dog, he said.

"Just because somebody's holding a white cane doesn't mean they can't take a photograph." THE CANADIAN PRESS

> **Your brain, especially your imagination, fills in the gaps that you can't see.** Photographer Pete Eckert

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Refugee hearing for gay student

Hazim Ismail, 27, is seeking refugee status after being outed to his Malaysian family as gay. He'll learn his fate at a hearing April 8. Right: Ismail had his face splashed on Malaysian tabloid Harian Metro on Tuesday. LEFT: AUSTIN GRABISH/FOR METRO; RIGHT: FACEBOOK

PERMANENT RESIDENCY

Hazim Ismail fears he will be persecuted in home country

Austin Grabish
For Metro

An international University of Winnipeg student who was disowned by his family after being outed as gay will find out if he gets to stay in Canada at an upcoming refugee hearing.

Hazim Ismail will plead his case before an adjudicator at the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada with a lawyer on April 8. He is seeking permanent residency out of fear he'll face persecution if he's sent back home to Malaysia.

Ismail said he's "extremely nervous" about the hearing and hasn't been able to sleep properly since finding out about it last Friday.

"It's giving me a lot of anxiety," Ismail, 27, said.

"At this point, I think I feel like I might as well have it tattooed on my forehead because I'm dreading that day."

Ismail made headlines last December after starting a GoFundMe page to cover the cost of tuition after he was cut off by his family.

Ever since he's been bombarded with hate mail, received death threats, and harassed by Malaysian media outlets.

On Tuesday, the negative publicity continued with Harian Metro, one of the country's tabloids, publishing a blurred photo of his face on the front page and Facebook conversations he said were private.

Refugee Board spokesperson Melissa Anderson said while she couldn't comment on a specific case, an adjudicator will appear via video conference at the Winnipeg hearing to collect evidence proving the case falls within the realms of the UN's Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

"The bottom line is they're looking to see whether someone has a well-founded fear of persecution based on the five convention grounds, which is nationality, race, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion," she said via phone when reached in Vancouver.

> **I feel like at this point I would get arrested (in Malaysia).**
> Hazim Ismail

Anderson said a decision will likely be given at the end of the hearing, which could last anywhere from two to three hours.

If denied, Anderson said Ismail can file for an appeal, but there's a short time frame somewhere around a month to do so, she said.

Ismail isn't sure what he'll do if he's sent home as sodomy is a criminal offence in Malaysia that carries a punishment of up to 20 years in prison.

"I feel like at this point I would get arrested. What happens beyond that I don't know for sure," he said.

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Syrian refugee plan gains slight support

RESETTLEMENT

Poll finds many Canadians still remain at odds over program

Thandi Fletcher
Metro | Vancouver

Support has grown slightly for Canada's plan to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees by March 1, but Canadians still remain at odds over the issue, results of a new poll show.

More than half of Canadians (52 per cent) support Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's plan to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to this country by March 1, while 44 per cent oppose the plan, according to an Angus Reid Institute poll.

That's an increase of eight percentage points in support of the plan since the institute's last poll on the issue in November, conducted shortly after the terrorist attacks in Paris, which found 54 per cent of Canadians opposed and 42 per cent in support of the plan.

Shachi Kurl, executive director of the Angus Reid Institute, said the increase in support might be due to the Liberal government's decision to push back the deadline from Jan. 1 to March 1.

"Canadians are still deeply divided on this issue," Kurl told Metro. "But what we can take away from this is … really that extension of two months took a lot of the heat off and certainly enabled a lot of people to change their thinking on the plan overall."

But the growth in support for refugee resettlement hasn't alleviated fears about the speed of the process.

According to the poll, 59 per cent say the deadline is too soon, while 37 per cent say it's about right. Only four per cent say things are moving too slowly. Those most in favour of the refugee resettlement plan are among those who feel the March 1 deadline is too ambitious.

"People are still concerned about the security aspect," said Kurl, adding that fewer than one-in-three respondents (31 per cent) say they feel the screening process is adequate, while 37 per cent believe it is inadequate and 32 per cent are unsure.

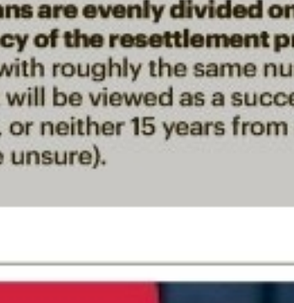
Regionally, support for the refugee plan is highest in British Columbia and Atlantic Canada, with 61 per cent in support and 60 per cent in support, respectively, and lowest in Alberta, with 41 per cent in support.

Coverage

The federal Liberals are ripping up a patchwork system of health-care coverage for newly arrived refugees and those seeking refugee status in favour of blanket coverage for all, beginning in April. Starting in 2017, they'll also extend coverage to certain refugees before they even arrive in Canada. THE CANADIAN PRESS

BY THE NUMBERS | Canadian refugee resettlement plan

1 Support of the government's plan



Just over half of Canadians support the government's plan, while 44% oppose it.

2 Outlook on the plan's legacy

Canadians are evenly divided on what the legacy of the resettlement program will be, with roughly the same number saying it will be viewed as a success, a failure, or neither 15 years from now (29% are unsure).

3 Regionally, Canadians remain divided about the plan, with support for it highest in British Columbia and Atlantic Canada, and lowest in Alberta.

British Columbia and Atlantic Canada | **Alberta**

4 Should we bring more refugees?

Roughly two-in-five (42%) say Canada should stop taking in Syrian refugees immediately. The rest either say the country should stop at 25,000 refugees (29%), or accept even more (29%).

ANDRES PLANA/METRO

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Omar Khadr. The federal government has decided against pursuing an appeal of an Alberta court's decision to grant the former Guantanamo Bay inmate bail. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Khadr's bail unopposed

TRIAL

Feds won't pursue appeal against Gitmo inmate's bail

The federal government has decided against pursuing an appeal of an Alberta court's decision to grant former Guantanamo Bay inmate Omar Khadr bail.

The decision came in a joint statement Thursday from Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale and Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould.

"The government of Canada respects the decision of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta, which determined that Mr. Khadr be released on bail in Canada pending his U.S. appeal of his U.S. convictions and sentence," the statement said.

"Withdrawing this appeal is an important step towards fulfilling the government's commitment to review its litigation strategy."

The decision caught one of Khadr's lawyers by pleasant surprise.

"We're pleased with the government's decision. We think it's the right decision. We never did think there was much merit to this appeal," Nate Whitling said in Toronto.

"Now Omar can get on with his reintegration."

The Liberal government decision is a sharp break from its Conservative predecessor, which fought hard to keep Khadr behind bars for the duration of his sentence.

Khadr, 29, was freed on bail last May after almost 13 years behind bars — four of them as a convicted war criminal. He has since been living with his lawyer, Dennis Edney, in Edmonton without incident.

Khadr ultimately pleaded guilty in October 2010 to five war crimes — including murder in the death of a U.S. special forces soldier. In exchange, the commission handed him a further eight-year sentence.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Senator concerned about mental health legislation

Psychological suffering should be excluded from future assisted-death legislation, says a Conservative Sen. Denise Batters. She became a mental-health advocate in the wake of her husband's suicide. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada lends spies to anti-ISIL intelligence effort

Communications Security Establishment, Canada's electronic spy service, is set to play a more prominent role in the war against ISIL. CSE is part of the so-called "Five Eyes" community, along with the NSA in America. THE CANADIAN PRESS

COURTS

'My family and I went through hell': Howe

Haley Ryan
Metro | Halifax

Lyle Howe says he will be a "better lawyer because of what I've dealt with" after a sexual assault charge against him was dismissed, halting the possibility of a second trial.

After the Crown decided not to proceed with the high-profile case on Thursday, Justice James Chipman dismissed the charge of sexual assault in Nova Scotia Supreme Court.

When asked how he was feeling, Howe told reporters he wouldn't describe it as happy "because it shouldn't have happened to begin with."

"My family and I went through hell, to say the least," he said.

"I've been dealing with hurdles like this my entire life. I don't know what's next because I didn't deserve this."

Howe spent two weeks in custody after being found guilty last May of sexually assaulting a 19-year-old woman in her Fairview apartment in March 2011, and sentenced to three years in prison in July 2014.

Halifax defence lawyer Lyle Howe. JEFF HARPER/METRO

The Nova Scotia Court of Appeal overturned the conviction, and granted Howe a new trial on Sept. 3 of 2015.

In the appeal, Justice Dave Farrar said the trial judge failed to explain the concept of "honest but mistaken belief in consent" to the jury.

Obama to talk human rights on Cuba trip

DIPLOMACY

Meeting with advocates a condition of historic visit

President Barack Obama said Thursday he'll raise human rights issues and other U.S. concerns with Cuban President Raul Castro during a history-making visit to the communist island nation.

The brief visit in mid-March will mark a watershed moment in relations between the U.S. and Cuba, making Obama the first sitting U.S. president to set foot on the island in nearly seven decades. While in the country, Obama plans to meet with groups advocating for change in Cuba, a condition the president had laid out publicly for such a trip.

Cuban Foreign Trade Minister Rodrigo Malmierca, on a visit to Washington, told The Associated Press that Obama's visit is good news for Cuba.

"The president will be welcomed," he said in Spanish.

The U.S. was estranged from the communist nation for over half a century until Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro moved toward rapprochement more than a year ago.

Since then, the nations have reopened embassies in Washington and Havana and have moved to restore commercial air travel, with a presidential visit seen as a key next step toward bridging the divide.

Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security adviser, said the president will carry the message that the U.S. and Cuba need not be defined by their "complicated and difficult history."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

We still have differences with the Cuban government ... America will always stand for human rights around the world.
President Obama

1 **Kainaat Soomro** sits in her home. She was 13 years old when three men kidnapped her, held her for several days and raped her.

2 **Sidra Kamwal** was the victim of a horrific acid attack.

3 **When Azra was 18**, her family sold her to an older man — now she fights for a divorce.

ALL PHOTOS: SHAKIL ADIL/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIDDLE EAST

Pakistani women still fighting for justice

Kainat Soomro was 13 years old and on her way to buy a toy for her newborn niece when three men kidnapped her, held her for several days and repeatedly raped her.

Eight years later, she is still battling for justice. She sits on a steel-framed bed in her parents' three-bedroom home, and holds her blue shawl tight around her body. When she describes the horror of her captivity, her voice is barely a whisper, but it gains strength when she talks of the fight she has been waging: going to Pakistan's courts, holding protests, rejecting the rulings of the traditional Jirga council, taking on the powerful landlord and politician who she says are protecting her attackers.

The Associated Press does not usually identify victims of sexual abuse, but Kainat has gone public with her case. Her battle for justice has inspired an award-winning 2014 movie, Outlawed in Pakistan. Malala Yousefzai, the Pakistani teenage Nobel Peace Prize winner who was shot by the Taliban, invited Kainat to the Nobel award ceremony, and her fund has given Kainat financial help.

Yet Kainat's family has paid a high price for her bravery. One sister remains unmarried and another was divorced because her in-laws were ashamed to be associated with Kainat. In 2010, her brother was killed over his sister's refusal to stay silent.

> **Each year a gamut of promises is made for the protection and development of women, but (they) remain unfulfilled.** Excerpt from the Human Rights Commission's 2014 report

Clutching a gold-framed picture of his son, Ghulam Nabi Soomro spat out words of condemnation. "They know about our troubles thousands of miles away but here in the next street no one is helping us get justice," he said.

In Pakistan, women are often too fearful to report sexual violence, yet the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded 423 rapes and 304 gang rapes last year. It also said that last year at least one woman a day was killed in the name of honour. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ECOLOGY

Hair-raising tumbleweed crisis in rural Australia

Irene Kuan
For Metro

There's a "hairy panic" in the rural city of Wangaratta, northeast of Victoria, Australia.

This term may have caught your attention, but what this "hairy panic" is referring to are fast-growing, out-of-control tumbleweeds that are overtaking properties, covering furniture and blocking entrance ways to homes and garages.

> **A massive fire hazard.**
> Post on Wangaratta's Facebook page

Although residents say the tumbleweeds are a common nuisance, the unusually dry conditions have made them unbearable this year. Wangaratta resident Matt Thewlis posted photos of the bizarre situation to the Rural City of Wangaratta's Facebook page asking for help, citing the weeds as "a massive fire hazard."

Residents told Australia's 7 News they spend hours everyday digging their way out of the colossal tumbleweeds all to have the pesky grass pile back up in the morning.

The "hairy panic" in Wangaratta has the media's attention too with coverage across Australian outlets and major international broadcasters like the BBC.

Tumbleweeds have taken over an Australian city. They are everywhere, overgrowing in backyards, and blocking entrances to homes in Wangaratta. FACEBOOK.COM

WILDLIFE

Crowd poses with beached baby dolphin until it dies

Wildlife groups are furious after a crowd on an Argentine beach passed around a young dolphin for selfies until it died from dehydration.

The baby La Plata dolphin — also known as a Fransicana dolphin and considered a vulnerable species — was found on Santa Teresita beach.

ANDREW FIFIELD/METRO

Tourists with the dolphin.
FACEBOOK.COM

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SEX ASSAULT CHARGES

Cosby wants refund on hush settlement

Bill Cosby is demanding that the accuser in his criminal case repay a confidential sex-abuse settlement because she co-operated with police who reopened the case and arrested him last year.

Cosby, 78, filed a sealed breach-of-contract lawsuit this month that said the settlement barred Andrea Constand from "voluntarily" discussing the case with law enforcement.

The suit said Constand had no legal duty to co-operate with Pennsylvania authorities because she lives in Canada. The interviews she and her mother gave to investigators last year were therefore "voluntary" and violated the settlement terms, the suit said.

"Despite being under no legal obligation to discuss any aspects of the events and allegations ... and despite being expressly prohibited from disclosing such information to anyone, Andrea Constand volunteered to participate and disclosed such information to the district attorney and others," Cosby's lawyers wrote in a redacted suit filed Thursday.

Cosby faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted of sexually assaulting Constand at his suburban Philadelphia home in 2004. He has not yet entered a plea, but his lawyers have vowed to clear his name. Constand, 43, is now a massage therapist in Toronto.

His lawsuit against her also names her mother and lawyers as defendants. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bill Cosby enters Montgomery County court for an appearance Feb. 2. JAMES ROBINSON/PENNLIVE.COM/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Turkey vows retaliation
Turkey blamed Kurdish militant groups at home and in neighbouring Syria on Thursday for a deadly suicide bombing in Ankara and vowed strong retaliation for the attack. The rush-hour car-bomb attack on Wednesday targeted buses carrying military personnel, killing 28 people and injuring dozens. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Karadzic verdicts March 24
The Yugoslav war crimes tribunal says it will announce the verdicts against former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic March 24, following his long-running trial on charges including genocide for allegedly masterminding Bosnian Serb atrocities throughout the Bosnian war.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

An Iraqi family returning from Europe waits for their luggage at Baghdad International Airport.

Iraqis cheer as they arrive. ALL PHOTOS KARIM KADIM/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Travellers kiss the ground at Baghdad airport.

Back to Baghdad for Iraqi refugees

INTERNATIONAL EFFORT

More than 100 people fly home to Iraq from Finland

Emotional scenes unfolded at the Baghdad International Airport on Thursday as dozens of Iraqis who had sought refuge in Europe returned home.

More than a hundred Iraqis, mostly young men, landed in Baghdad on a flight from Finland. Some kneeled, kissing the ground. Many were holding the so-called "yellow passport," travel documents issued by Iraqi embassies in Europe and elsewhere.

"It's too difficult to live there," said one of the women, Um Ealia, who declined to be identified by her full name fearing for her own security. "I've come back home. I feel happy. I have good memories in Iraq."

She was one of 103 people who returned to Iraq Thursday, according to Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman Ahmed Jamal.

Over the past 12 months thousands of Iraqis are estimated to have returned home from Europe, citing lack of economic opportunity due to language barriers, cold weather and cultural differences as the reasons for going back after often harrowing journeys by sea and land that can take weeks.

The Geneva-based International Organization for Migration says it helped nearly 3,500 Iraqis return from Europe in 2015 alone. But the OIM says that is just a fraction of the total estimated number as many return by their own means.

In 2015, an estimated 70,000 Iraqis joined the tide of refugees and migrants making the thousands of miles long journey to Europe in an effort to escape war and poverty across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia from Iraq. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOME AGAIN

A flight to the Finnish
The flight was organized by the Helsinki Police Department, which has organized flights for returning migrants for more than a decade and said they are ready to continue similar chartered flights between Finland and Iraq to meet a growing number of returning Iraqis, according to Det. Supt. Hannu Pietila.

SEDITION CHARGES

Protests spread in response to arrest of India student leader

A protest that rocked a New Delhi university this week spread across India on Thursday, with students and teachers in at least 10 cities demanding the release of a student leader arrested on sedition charges and accused of being anti-Indian.

The protesters were outraged by nationally televised scenes of Kanhaiya Kumar, the student union president at Jawaharlal Nehru University, being kicked and punched while he was escorted to a court hearing Wednesday.

That situation renewed allegations that the Hindu nationalist governing party is intolerant.

He was arrested last Friday over his participation in events where anti-India slogans were allegedly shouted. A New Delhi court has ordered him to stay in custody for two weeks. The court will hear his bail plea on Friday.

The demands for the student's freedom in the Indian capital were met by mobs of Hindu nationalists, including many lawyers, attacking students and accusing them of being anti-Indian.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and other Hindu groups accuse left-wing student groups of anti-nationalism because of their criticism of the 2013 execution of a Kashmiri separatist convicted of an attack on Parliament.

Kumar's treatment and attacks on teachers who supported him have triggered allegations that the Modi government and the BJP are cracking down on political dissent in the name of patriotism.

Soon after the protests began, India's Home Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted that anyone shouting anti-India slogans "will not be tolerated or spared."

The violence by lawyers occurred despite the Supreme Court ordering the police to ensure security in the court and has drawn wide criticism of the lawyers and police.

"Such a deliberate obstruction of justice amounts to constitutional contempt and cannot go unpunished," said Maja Daruwala of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A student waves the Indian flag at a protest against the arrest of a student union president. CHANDAN KHANNA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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Virus causes modest drag

ECONOMY

Zika threat hurting trade, tourism in Latin America

The spread of Zika will have a modest drag on economies in Latin America, with tourism-dependent Caribbean nations most at risk, the World Bank said Thursday. It made $150 million immediately available to help fight the virus.

The World Health Organization has declared a global health emergency in response to the Zika outbreak and the U.S. is urging pregnant women to avoid travel to the 26 nations and territories in the Americas where Zika is present because researchers have identified possible links between the virus and rare birth defects.

But despite the scare, the World Bank says the impact from the epidemic is likely to be small.

In a report, it estimates lost revenue will total only $3.6 billion, or about 0.6 per cent of the region's gross domestic product. That would come from reduced travel to the region and sick employees missing work, while anti-mosquito efforts will strain already tight national budgets.

The forecast assumes the regional and international response to the virus is swift and well co-ordinated.

"Our analysis underscores the importance of urgent action to halt the spread of the Zika virus and to protect the health and well-being of people in the affected countries," Jim Yong Kim, president of the Washington-based World Bank, said in a statement.

While a number of countries have reported a rash of business conference and wedding cancellations, hotels were booked full and the mood as festive as ever during this month's Carnival celebration in Brazil, the epicentre of the epidemic. In Rio de Janeiro, average hotel occupancy was 86 per cent during the festivities, an increase of almost three percentage points over the previous year, according to the Brazilian Hoteliers' Association. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mara Torres, eight months pregnant, looks at a mosquito net placed over her bed Wednesday in Cali, Colombia. The spread of Zika will modestly affect Latin American economies, with tourism-dependent Caribbean nations most at risk, the World Bank says. LUIS ROBAYO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

IN BRIEF

Canadian Tire's next move likely e-commerce: CEO

The next acquisition for Canadian Tire Corp. will likely be in e-commerce, says the head of the national retailer.

"We set a path for ourselves to be a leader in e-commerce in Canada and that's where we're heading," said president and CEO Michael Medline.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Cosmetics company buys Lise Watier Cosmetiques

Groupe Marcelle Inc., a developer, manufacturer and distributor of cosmetics, has acquired Lise Watier Cosmetiques.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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STOCK OPTIONS

Shopify calls on feds to abandon tax plan

The CEO of one of Canada's up-and-coming tech companies is calling on the federal government to abandon its plan to expand taxation of stock options, saying the move will make it more difficult for startup firms to attract talent.

Tobi Lutke said the Liberal proposal would have made it more difficult to launch his Ottawa-based company, Shopify.

"It would have been harder to build Shopify with the taxation being the way that it's proposed," he said in an interview.

During last year's federal election campaign, the Liberals promised to cap how much can be claimed through stock option deductions.

The party said employees with up to $100,000 in annual gains would be unaffected, a move it said would protect startups.

> **Canada needs a tech company of the size of that America produces.**
> Tobi Kutke

Finance Minister Bill Morneau said he will soon release details about the commitment. The government is expected to release its first budget mid-March.

Lutke said many people took massive pay cuts to join his company several years ago in exchange for options to purchase equity. While the business is now mature enough to survive the changes, Lutke said it could have a disastrous impact on younger startups. While Shopify continues to grow its revenues, Lutke said it will focus on taking advantage of opportunities to grow before posting profits late next year.

"We think Canada needs a tech company of the size that America produces and that's what we are aiming for," he said.

Shopify provides services to more than 243,000 small- and medium-sized customers in 150 countries. It has more than 1,000 employees working at offices in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa and Waterloo, Ont.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Tobi Lutke, CEO of Shopify. PAUL CHIASSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Metro POLL

Where is it okay to smoke?

Visit metronews.ca to have your say.

New research shows indoor smoking bans like the one introduced in Ireland in 2004 do help reduce illnesses caused by second-hand smoke, which kill 600,000 people per year worldwide. Gone are days of smoking sections and billboards advertising "smooth" cigarettes, but 18 per cent of Canadians still take a puff at least occasionally, and there's controversy as to where they should be allowed to do it — indoors, outdoors, in public, in cars or not at all. We asked readers if the right to clean air should take priority, or if the "smoke free" movement has gone so far that it threatens individual freedom.

1 Should smoking be banned in indoor public spaces?

2 What's your experience with second-hand smoke?

3 Where should smoking be banned?

30% Indoor public places
25% In cars if children are present
17% In private homes if children are present
14% Outdoor public places
8% Literally everywhere. And let's ban tobacco too
6% Other

Let's have places (and rules) where it is specifically allowed. Adults-only places.

It should be allowed everywhere except where there's a fire hazard.

If you live in a city, second-hand smoke doesn't hold a candle to all of the smog.

Ban smoking in apartment buildings where smoke can get into other units.

WE ASKED Metro readers

Why show mosquitoes mercy?

Genna Buck
Metro | Toronto

The Zika virus should be called the sneaky virus.

In near-silence it ambushed the better part of a continent, infecting more than a million people in less than two years, mostly in Brazil. The majority got mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. And then the babies started being born.

There's very strong, but not yet conclusive, evidence that Zika exposure in utero can cause microcephaly — infants with abnormally small heads and brains. It's devastating, and it often isn't diagnosed until birth. Thousands of babies are believed to be affected, though the uptick may be partly because of more diagnoses and possibly other causes, including other viruses.

Pope Francis has indicated he may be OK with contraception for women at risk of Zika. In ultra-Catholic Latin America. That's how high the level of fear and anguish is.

And it's all mosquitoes' fault. *Aedes aegypti*'s fault, specifically. That's the invasive African species that transmits Zika, dengue and yellow fever.

Not even humans can hold a candle to the jerk-itude of mosquitoes. No other species has come close to causing as much human suffering and death — skeeters sicken hundreds of millions and kill 725,000 people every year.

So why let them live? Why not global annihilation? A high ecological price might be warranted in exchange for a world with no Zika or other mosquito-borne diseases.

Someone brings this up seemingly every time there's a major mosquito-borne outbreak. This time it was Daniel Engber of Slate, who called for "full-scale mosquito-cide."

Eradication, whether of a virus, an insect or anything else, is a seductive public-health concept: It's simple, it's focused and it lends itself to goal-setting and international co-operation. And when it works, it saves not just the lives of people today, but billions of future people.

I *want* mosquito eradication to make sense, at least for *aegypti*, which isn't even native to the Americas. But there's no scientific consensus that it a) could be done, or that b) the environmental collateral damage would be worth it.

Problem A: Feasibility. You may have heard about a new high-tech, lethal anti-mosquito weapon: genetically modified male mosquitoes that mate with wild females and produce mosquito babies that can't survive. The UN supports this.

Though the technology is experimental, it's been shown to work: *Aegypti* has plummeted where such frankenflies have been introduced. But large-scale use would "take mind-boggling resources and billions of dollars," University of Winnipeg biologist Robert Anderson told me.

The frankenfly strategy would also have to be "militaristic," Anderson said. Homebody *aegypti* likes to cosy up to humans. It would rather roost indoors in a half-full water glass than a swamp. Modified mosquitoes would have to be released — continually released, remember, because they kill themselves off — in and around homes. Logistical nightmare. Likely unpopular.

Problem B: Environmental impact. What would we miss in a biosphere without mosquitoes? Such science is speculative but the answer might be, "Eh, not that much."

Mosquitos go through drastic population fluctuations, so they're not usually an essential link in their local food webs. I asked Brock University ecologist Fiona Hunter about this, and she said *aegypti* can be erased from the Americas but other mosquitoes are still essential for biodiversity.

So where does that leave us in the Zika battle? Classic mosquito control: eliminating standing water and providing pesticides, repellent, bed nets, window screens and public education. It works OK. It's a pain, and it's expensive, and it means playing nice with our mortal enemy. But it seems the best weapon we have.

Genna Buck is a science writer and a section editor at Metro. Follow her on Twitter @genna_buck.

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
metroview

It was a relief to leave the gilded never-neverland of Saks

A trip to Saks Fifth Avenue, which unveiled its inaugural Canadian store in Toronto yesterday, begins long before you get there.

It begins standing naked in front of your thrift-store closet, fretting over an outfit. It's like dressing for a date with a wealthy man you may not like but are desperate to impress.

I opt for all black, a cocoon dress over slim slacks, hoping the $2 scarf around my neck has whiffs of 1970s Gucci, but I know I won't have the nerve to take my coat off under the bright lights of the three-floored jewel box. When I eventually glance at my reflection in one of the store's many mirrors and find eyeliner smudged down to my cheeks, it's proof to all those women flinging perfumed paper and macaroons at me that I'm an imposter. Then, a sleek-suited salesman for a French skincare line uses my mirror and checks his teeth.

I am not the only interloper: Tourists with backpacks, an aging biker-gang-styled guy and an elderly couple pulling a wheeled shopping bag wander past small, $150 bottles of perfume from a rare made-in-Japan brand, Celine's $2,500 horseshoe-shaped leather handbags, diamond rings and Prada sunglasses and bouquets of blush-coloured peonies.

Some — amazingly — are here to shop: buying purses that appear from backrooms in red velvet bags; opting, from among more than 1,000 styles of shoes, for the pink, red, and gold-studded Valentino stilettos for $1,500.

At the Carolina Herrera and Oscar de la Renta boutique, I pause to finger an otherwise out-of-reach voluminous evening skirt: $3,790.

Those with money to spend exclaim, "Absolutely gorgeous!" Important-looking people talk with TV-news crews, while an orchestral rendition of Somewhere Over the Rainbow, of all songs, floats between racks.

For me it's aspirational, but luxury shopping is a growing reality for some. Saks has plans for dozens more stores across the country and Nordstrom is also expanding north of the border, all while luxury-brand flagship stores pop up.

I typically steer clear of such spaces, not just because I can't afford what's inside, but to avoid feeling even schlubbier than I already do. So it was a relief to leave the gilded never-neverland, and step out into the sharp winter cold.

The Saks Fifth Avenue awnings dripped melted snow onto sidewalk crowds. People slipped into the subway or begged for change. I left without those $775 Manolo Blahnik floral pumps, but I did stop by The Bay's repair shop to get my watch fixed, for $22.60.

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MOVIES MUSIC TELEVISION GOSSIP

From scripture to the big screen

GENRE

There is a right way to make a good Christian film

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

In 2006 Entertainment Weekly rated The Passion of the Christ — Mel Gibson's gritty and gory account of Jesus Christ's final 12 hours leading up to his crucifixion in Jerusalem — the most controversial movie of all time.

Its detractors noted historical and biblical inaccuracies and accused the film of being anti-Semitic and excessively violent. Despite the cries of critics, the film became the top-grossing Christian movie ever.

In fact, it was something of a miracle at the box office, earning $611,899,420 worldwide in its original release.

Since then there has been a trickle of films aimed at a Christian audience, some successful, some not, some controversial, some not.

Passion had a great marketing strategy coupled with enough controversy to get people interested to see what all the fuss was about.

It's been hard to capture that kind of lightning in a bottle again, which is why we haven't seen a cavalcade of biblical epics in mainstream theatres.

This weekend Risen looks to the bible for inspiration. Playing like an unofficial sequel to Gibson's film, it tells the tale of the Resurrection from the perspective of Clavius (Joseph Fiennes), a Roman Centurion commanded by Pontius Pilot to quell reports of a risen Messiah and thwart an insurrection in Jerusalem.

The film, directed by Waterworld helmer Kevin Reynolds, appears to have skirted around controversy by telling the story from the point of view of a fictional and non-believing character.

The studio is quick to note, however, that the script is a "faithful scriptural treatment of the story."

The secret to success for a Christian themed movie lies with the filmmaker's ability to translate the scripture to the screen.

"Christians like a well told story," War Room director Alex Kendrick, who, with his brother Stephen have been labelled the "Steven Spielbergs of Christian cinema," told just after his movie toppled Straight Outta Compton from the number one spot at the box office last year.

"What we don't like is when our saviour's name is abused or taken in vain or our morals trashed, so that keeps us away from many movies. It's amazing to me that if Hollywood knew how many movies we stayed away from on purpose because of some of the offensive aspects they would change because it means much more money for them."

Recently Noah, starring Russell Crowe as the arc-building prophet, angered some Christian groups for not being reverent enough. Director Darren Aronofsky called it the, "least biblical biblical film ever made," and a studio press release admitted, "artistic license has been taken."

The Christian community has met other films with open arms. Catherine Hardwicke's The Nativity Story drew on the gospel of Matthew for the story of the Immaculate Conception and while it wasn't the box office bonanza that made Passion headline news, it made money and skirted around controversy.

In 2004 Christian films were popular enough to garner a category at the irreverent Mexican MTV Movie Awards. Up for Most Divine Miracle in a Movie was the water into wine sequence from The Last Temptation of Christ; Passion's Christ healing Peter's injured ear scene; and the part in Bruce Almighty where Bruce causes his girlfriend's chest to grow several sizes. Mexican audiences voted and Bruce Almighty's miracle took the prize.

Risen, opening this weekend, tells the tale of a Roman Centurion tasked with quelling reports of a risen Messiah. CONTRIBUTED

MOVIE RATINGS by Richard Crouse

Race	★★★
Risen	★★
The Witch	★★★★
Touched With Fire	★★★★

HOW RATING WORKS
★★★★ SEE IT
★★★ WORTHWHILE
★★ UP TO YOU
★ SKIP IT

Black magic and 17th century feminism

HORROR

Robert Eggers cast a spell on critics with The Witch

Steve Gow
For Metro Canada

Filmmaker Robert Eggers is winning awards and getting a lot of attention for crafting what's quite possibly Hollywood's very first feminist horror film featuring 17th Century New England pilgrims.

"I think it's just something about the zeitgeist and I'm lucky that witches are in the air," explained Eggers during an interview about The Witch and its accumulating acclaim.

"Two years ago, people might've just gone 'it's just some weird pilgrim horror movie, (screw) that.'"

Of course, The Witch isn't just a "weird pilgrim movie." In fact, the thought-provoking drama about one puritan family's brush with black magic is a visually-striking authentication of the witch archetype and it's manifestation of "men's fears, desires, ambivalence, fantasies about women and female power" in the 17th Century.

But the film also "strangely (represented) women's fears, desires, ambivalences about motherhood in this extremely male-dominated society," added Eggers. "And the shadows of that still exist today."

A far cry from the popularized green-skinned caricature in a pointy hat from Broadway musical Wicked or even the Hollywood classic The Wizard of Oz, Eggers' witch dares to demonstrate that even though his film is set nearly 400 years ago in the forests of New England, it's still an important parallel to society's modern perceptions of women.

"I wasn't trying to go at this with any sort of social, political, religious angle or agenda but when you read the primary source material, feminism is just bursting out all over the place," said Eggers. "I mean, as a collective cultural conscience, actually claiming female power in a positive way is something we're still struggling with."

Underlining the drama with such subtext may have been the more manageable task for the Sundance Film Festival winner for Best Directing. In fact, attempting to capture the 17th Century on celluloid seemed to be the more considerable challenge.

"Puritans were not into art so there's not a great painting tradition from the period," explained Eggers of the largely uncharted look and feel of the era. "But we feel confident, even if this isn't the most accurate version, certainly this is our best — given the most up-to-date research. I mean, we screened for colonial historians and they gave it a thumbs up."

SUPERSTITION

The Real World Witch

"In the 17th Century, the real world and fairytale world were the exact same thing," said Eggers. "If you called someone a witch, you really believed this person was capable of doing all the horrific, primal things that the witch in my film does."

Anya Taylor-Joy stars in the pilgrim horror movie The Witch, in theatres today. CONTRIBUTED

When you read the primary source material, feminism is just bursting out all over the place.
Director Robert Eggers

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DEBATE

Doesn't matter if you're black or white: Joseph Fiennes

Joseph Fiennes is defending himself in the wake of criticism after being cast as Michael Jackson in an upcoming half-hour TV special, acknowledging the topic is "sensitive" but never intending it to be divisive.

The white actor will play the King of Pop in the upcoming Sky Arts comedy Elizabeth, Michael, and Marlon, which tells the story of a road trip taken by Jackson, Marlon Brando and Elizabeth Taylor as they flee New York City after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks.

"I deal in imagination, so I don't think imagination should have rules stamped on them," Fiennes told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "If it promotes stereotyping, then it's wrong. I made a distinction that the Jackson project doesn't do that."

The casting of Fiennes comes as controversy rages over the lack of diversity in the Oscar nominations and in the film industry at large. The actor admitted to being initially surprised by the colorblind casting. "It was a shock. I thought someone had got it wrong."

But the Shakespeare in Love actor said he loves a challenge, providing it's in good taste.

Joseph Fiennes to play Michael Jackson in TV special. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"This is territory that is sensitive. One must determine if this portrayal is one that is going to be positive entertainment, and one that will not bring about division and put anyone's noses out of joint, so I went with the mind that this was a positive lighthearted comedy," Fiennes said.

I deal in imagination, so I don't think imagination should have rules stamped on them.
Joseph Fiennes, actor

"This is not a movie; it's a small television 20-minute sketch. It's a very sweet comedy that looks at Michael, Marlon and Taylor," Fiennes said. The actor admits if it were anything more, "I wouldn't be the guy for the job."

Fiennes recounted an incident of discrimination he witnessed many years ago in England when a black actress was picked to play an iconic white woman.

"Twenty years ago I worked for the National Theatre as a dresser. I saw a brilliant actress do Marilyn Monroe. Two critics refused to see it because she was black. I was working it from behind the stage and I couldn't understand it because she was Marilyn for me. It was a lack of imagination on their part," he said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hollywood protected by First Amendment

APPEALS

Ruling throws out case against The Hurt Locker

A federal appeals court on Wednesday upheld the dismissal of an Iraq War veteran's lawsuit against the makers of the The Hurt Locker that claimed the Oscar-winning film portrayed him in a bad light.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled a lower court's dismissal of Sgt. Jeffrey Sarver's 2009 lawsuit against director Kathryn Bigelow and screenwriter Mark Boal was proper. Sarver, a bomb-disposal technician who was shadowed by Boal in Iraq, contended the film defamed him by portraying him as obsessed with death.

The court disagreed, saying the film was protected by the First Amendment and its fictional protagonist, even if he is based on Sarver, was shown to be a heroic figure.

The ruling states the justices agreed that reasonable viewers of the movie "would be left with the conclusion that the character Will James was a heroic figure, albeit one struggling with certain internal conflicts."

The ruling further stated, "The Hurt Locker is speech that is fully protected by the First Amendment, which safeguards the storytellers and artists who take the raw materials of life — including the stories of real individuals, ordinary or extraordinary — and transform them into art, be it articles, books, movies, or plays."

"This is a highly important precedent that will have major implications for the entire film industry," said attorney Jeremiah Reynolds, who represented Bigelow and Boal.

The Hurt Locker won six Oscars, including one for Boal's screenplay and another for Bigelow's directing. It also won for best picture.

Sarver's attorney, Michael Dezsi, says the ruling is disappointing, and he's considering how to proceed, including an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"Sgt. Sarver courageously defended his country and the liberties of this nation in the most dangerous of circumstances, and has now been repaid by the failure of the judicial system to protect his rights," Dezsi wrote in an email.

Sarver sued over the film days before it won big at the 2010 Oscars. A Los Angeles federal judge dismissed his case the following year.

Boal was embedded with Sarver's unit in 2004 and wrote about Sarver and other bomb disposal experts in an article for Playboy magazine titled The Man in the Bomb Suit.

Sarver said Boal wanted to stay with him exclusively because he didn't trust other bomb techs.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sgt. Jeffrey Sarver (inset) filed a lawsuit against the makers of The Hurt Locker alleging defamation, that filmmakers falsely claim characters in the film are fictional. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

> **"This is a highly important precedent that will have major implications for the entire film industry.**
>
> Attorney Jeremiah Reynolds, who represented The Hurt Locker filmmakers in the suit

Leaping into the myth of a sports legend

Toronto-born Stephan James plays the legendary 1936 African American Olympic track-and-field gold medallist Jesse Owens in Race. CONTRIBUTED

BIOPIC

Canadian plays iconic Olympic athlete Jesse Owens in Race

Richard Crouse
For Metro Canada

In the film Race, Toronto-born actor Stephan James plays the greatest and most famous athlete in track and field history. But, when he was approached about the part, James wasn't sure exactly who Jesse Owens was.

"When I got that call that they're making a Jesse Owens biopic I scratched my head a little," the 22-year-old says. "He won those gold medals, right? How many did he win again? I didn't know how many he won or where he won them or under what circumstances or when this all took place."

He quickly learned about Owens's early career, the Ohio State races that made him a legend and how an African American runner stared down Hitler by winning four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.

"After reading the script and researching his life to find out the backstory I was literally blown away. Blown away that this had taken place almost 80 years ago."

The film documents 28 turbulent months in Owens's life, from just before he enrolled in university to the Olympics where, ESPN would later say, the runner "single-handedly crush[ed] Hitler's myth of Aryan supremacy."

Jason Sudeikis, who plays Owens's college trainer Larry Snyder, says he wanted to make the movie because "it didn't lean on any one thing. It was bigger than just a sports film. It wasn't pontificating, we didn't treat Jesse with kid gloves and only as an icon. We can't have all our heroes with giant hammers and capes. While that is good at the box office and for people with stock options I don't know how good it is for little boys and girls who think that is the only way they can become a hero. We got to show the humanity behind him, we see him warts and all. You see his petulance, you get to see his indecision, you see him make horrible missteps as a husband and father, and yet all through that adversity he has the humility and integrity to correct those mistakes. That is just as heroic as whipping Hitler's buns for four gold medals."

We got to show the humanity behind [Jesse Owens], we see him warts and all.
Jason Sudeikis, who plays Owen's trainer

James, who was recently seen as civil rights leader John Lewis in the critically acclaimed Selma, felt the weight of playing a legend on screen.

"It is one thing to be leading your own film," he says. "To be number one on that call sheet, to know you have the biggest workload, to know that there are millions of dollars and ideas on your head. It's another thing to play Jesse Owens, the icon, the man, the myth, the legend. A guy who is not only a pivotal person in American history but world history, so I knew I had my work cut for me. The pressure was there. Obviously he's not alive but his family is and have been very much involved since the beginning. There is a certain responsibility to play a real character, of course, but the great Jesse Owens is a whole other thing."

After starring as Owens in Race, James has his sights set on playing another kind of hero. "I want to play Spider-Man," he says. "I think that would be dope. I've always wanted to play a superhero but Spider-Man is so cool, so unassuming. I think I can relate a little."

Mad Max Oscar onslaught stuns Miller

AWARDS SEASON

Apocalyptic action sequel nominated for 10 Oscars

Of the many roads to the Academy Awards, none is as unlikely as the one taken (at ferocious speed, with engines roaring) by George Miller's Mad Max: Fury Road. Whatever one's concept of "Oscar bait" is, it does not include action-movie dystopias with face-painting kamikazes and blind, fire-shooting metal guitarists who answer to the name of "Doof."

Despite Fury Road being about as far away from the usual Oscar-friendly costumed drama, Miller's fireball of a film heads into the Feb. 28 Academy Awards with 10 nods (second only to The Revenant), including best picture and best director for Miller. Nominated in every technical category, Mad Max stands a good chance of being the night's most-awarded film.

It's a gratifying if utterly unforeseen outcome for the 70-year-old Miller, who spent more than a decade trying to get various iterations of a Mad Max sequel off the ground.

But when Fury Road was finally unveiled in May, the response was rapturous. Here was not the average, bloated summer sequel at all. Here was a blisteringly cinematic movie stuffed with allegorical meaning, with much to say about gender roles and power.

"I treat action movies very, very seriously," Miller says in a recent interview between stops on the awards circuit. "It's not something like: Here's a movie with talkie bits and now some action. We were trying to conflate the two."

The multitude of Oscar nominations for Fury Road speaks to the widespread admiration for the movie's old-school craft. Though it includes extensive visual effects, Fury Road was shot with real vehicles on a real location. Miller is the rare action filmmaker who speaks of Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd as inspirations.

"It finds its antecedents in those early films, those pre-sound movies where arguably the film language, this very new language we had, was forged," Miller says. "When I first came to cinema that's where I first went to with a pretty strong sense of inquiry as to: What is this new language? It's not much more than 100 years old and we can read it before we can read books."

The language of Fury Road — an essentially non-stop chase through a post-apocalyptic wasteland — is wildly kinetic. It's expressed almost entirely through imagery rather than dialogue. Tom Hardy, who inherited the role of Max from Mel Gibson, described Miller's movie as "if Obi-Wan Kenobi could make an action movie."

It's composed of approximately 2,900 shots. The average shot is 2 seconds and 9 frames. "Film is a mosaic art and this one had many pieces," Miller says.

The mammoth task of assembling so much footage from scenes sometimes shot with a dozen cameras fell to Miller's wife, editor Margaret Sixel. She, too, is up for an Oscar.

It's Sixel's first nod, but several of Miller's films have previously been Oscar nominated, including 1992's Lorenzo's Oil, 1995's Babe and 2006's Happy Feet.

For many, it's the film's story of female empowerment, led by Charlize Theron's one-armed warrior Furiosa, that's makes Fury Road exceptional. Some have called it a feminist action film.

"It was really, really gratifying when people did respond and saw all its resonances and really picked up on it," Miller says. "The attraction of something like Mad Max: Fury Road is basically allegorical. You're trying to find those things in the story that seem to be constant in humanity."

"I always thought that you really don't know what your film is until some time passes and it's reflected back at you by the audience," he says. "That process seems to be accelerated now. It's been surprising and gratifying."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tom Hardy as Max Rockatansky, in a scene from Mad Max: Fury Road. WARNER BROS. PICTURES VIA THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

> There's a great quote from Hunter S. Thompson where he said that when something turned right for him unexpectedly, it was like falling down an elevator shaft into a pool of mermaids. It's been a little bit like that.
>
> Director George Miller

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THE TV DINNER JESSICA ALLEN

Caesar salad is a lot like Girls. It's easy to mock, it's misunderstood, and sometimes it's controversial.

The Caesar salad is many different things to many different people. Dressed up with lardons and a poached quail egg, it's a playful gourmet dish. With strips of watery white chicken breast, it's a "healthy" pub option. And at home, with rubberized bacon bits, a jar of Rene's and packaged croutons, it's mediocre. Unless, that is, you Google "easiest Caesar salad dressing" out of necessity because your Rene's expired five months ago, and happen to have real bacon and homemade croutons on hand and you make the best Caesar salad you've ever had, like I did on Monday night.

"I think Caesar salad is considered gauche in some circles," I said to Simon as I mashed up garlic and anchovy, right before we settled in with our dinner and a sneak peek of HBO's fifth season of Girls. "Maybe because of its overexposure, like beet and goat cheese salad. It's also misunderstood because it's not even Italian."

"So you've told me," he said, "a hundred times."

"And it's controversial: were there anchovies in the original dressing? Probably not."

Simon sighed.

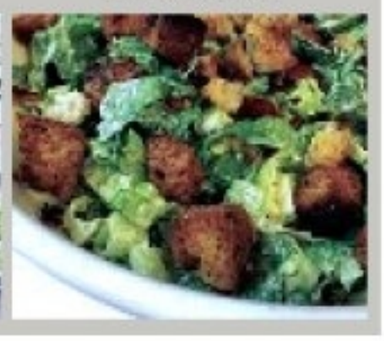
"Oh my God, you know what?" I said, as lemon juice stung a hangnail. "Caesar salad is a lot like Girls. It's easy to mock, it's misunderstood, and sometimes it's controversial."

"And having an opinion about Girls is as irrelevant as having an opinion about Caesar salad," Simon said. "because everyone has got one."

Including me. I was a piece of solipsistic sh— in my early 20s, who nearly dropped out of grad school because what was the point? By day I sat on my deck reading Goethe and making collages in my journal using old National Geographics. By night I waited tables.

THE SERIES: Girls

THE MEAL: Caesar salad



When Lena Dunham was 23, she wrote, directed and starred in a feature film, Tiny Furniture, that the New York Times compared to a John Cheever novel. She turned that twentysomething self-serving melancholy into art and two years later, in 2012, continued to mine it for Girls, the award-winning HBO comedy drama that Dunham created and stars in as Hannah Horvath. For some reason, her work makes me want to take stock of who I am and where I'm going, with a force that few of her contemporaries can muster.

This latest season, which premieres Sunday night, begins with Marnie's country wedding. Does this matrimonial moment suggest that at least one of the four millennial cohorts has grown up? "We're thinking Laurel Canyon," Marnie explains to her make-up and hair stylist. "Let's do like a Ralph Lauren and Joni Mitchell: artistic but also with a nod to my cultural heritage, which is white, Christian woman."

Maybe not.

But that's part of the show's appeal: everyone is aimless, undecided and not yet self-conscious about referencing, say, John Cassavetes as a creative influence.

The first four episodes showcase Dunham's talent for finding humour in both the sacred and profane, and exposes her body — to educate (bodies can be diverse, even on TV) and to use as a punchline, like Buster Keaton did. And the show continues to be a complicated mix of viscerally shocking laughs and subversive inversions of tired familiar tropes. Meanwhile, Ray, played perfectly by Alex Karpovsky, continues to function as the show's Greek chorus, articulating what the audience is thinking."While she's painfully narcissistic, shockingly tone-deaf, and just generally one of the most insufferable people you'll ever meet," he says about Hannah, "she means something to me."

Me too.

Jessica Allen is the digital correspondent on CTV's The Social.

TV BRIEF

Brad Pitt may get his moment in the Sons of Anarchy prequel

Brad Pitt might take on a leading role in a Sons of Anarchy prequel, reports NME.

The creator of Sons of Anarchy, Kurt Sutter, has confirmed that he wants to make a prequel of the show about a California motorcycle club that ended in 2014. Sutter said that the prequel would start in the Vietnam War and would be a 10-12 episode series.

Sons of Anarchy star Charlie Hunnam played the character Jackson 'Jax' Teller in the original series. If the series takes off, Hunnam hinted in an interview with Men's Journal that Brad Pitt could be chosen to play his father John Teller. AFP

Brad Pitt. GETTY IMAGES

REALITY TV

'Big Ang' of Mob Wives has died

Angela "Big Ang" Raiola, the raspy-voiced bar owner who gained fame on the reality TV series Mob Wives, died early Thursday, nearly a year after being diagnosed with throat cancer. She was 55.

Raiola died at a New York City hospital while surrounded by friends and family, said series producer Jennifer Graziano.

A statement posted from Raiola's Twitter account said she had "peacefully ended her battle with cancer."

"YOU (Her fans) were some of the most special people in her world, and she loved you immensely," said the statement. "Thank you for your love, prayers, and unconditional support of Angela right to the end."

Raiola was initially diagnosed in March 2015 with throat cancer that spread to her brain and lung.

Even as she fought the disease, the native New Yorker remained the candid, colorful figure that viewers came to know on VH1's Mob Wives and her two sequels.

"You can call me Angela. I'll call you handsome," she told TV host Dr. Mehmet Oz during a pretaped appearance that aired on his Dr. Oz show Feb. 16.

Raiola, nicknamed Big Ang for her nearly 6-foot height, told Oz she was trying to keep her spirits up as chemotherapy and radiation failed to check the disease. She had already undergone several surgeries, and her trademark flowing black hair was gone, replaced by a short, blond cut.

"I look at my kids and my grandchildren and I know how much they need me," said Raiola, who lived with her daughter Raquel's family on New York's Staten Island, where Raiola ran the Drunken Monkey bar.

A cigarette smoker for 40 years, Raiola said she stopped immediately after her first cancer diagnosis last year. Her doctors told her the disease was "positively" caused by smoking, she said, and she called for people to quit the habit or resist picking it up.

Her sister and brother-in-law were key members of her support team, Raiola told Oz, but she said her husband, Neil Murphy, was no longer part of her life.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Angela Raiola, better known as Big Ang, starred in the reality TV series Mob Wives. CHARLES SYKES/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

SERIES FINALE

Raiola will remain part of upcoming episodes of Mob Wives, which wrapped production in January, producer Graziano said. The series finale airs March 9, with a reunion episode set for March 16.

Accountants by day, metalheads by night

JUNO AWARDS

KEN mode are equal pros at rackets and tax brackets

Brothers Shane and Jesse Matthewson often surprise people with their accounting backgrounds. TREVOR HAGAN FOR TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

It's unlikely anyone has ever listened to Jesse Matthewson seethe and scathe over KEN mode's pummelling, unhinged noise rock nihilism and subsequently wondered: could this guy save me some money on my taxes?

In fact, he probably could. Matthewson and his brother, Shane, are both accountants trained at Manitoba's Asper School of Business. They're also the creative spine of KEN mode — which stands for Kill Everyone Now, by the way — an anarchic, perennially pissed-off purveyor of throat-shredding tirades and titanic Shellac anti-grooves.

If it seems to you that there's something incongruous about crunching numbers by day and eardrums by night, you're not alone.

"It definitely helps us stand out," laughed Jesse.

That much was obvious the first time KEN mode was nominated for a Juno, at 2012's soiree in Ottawa. The band triumphed in the metal/hard music category in its inaugural year, beating out the tattoo-strewn, long-haired likes of Anvil and Cauldron, bands that look every bit the part of hard-rocking, hard-living metal titans.

Then there was Shane, clad in a cerulean checked shirt tucked neatly into dressy navy trousers, and Jesse, wearing all black but still sufficiently buttoned-and-tucked business-casual that was more concierge than Cannibal Corpse.

"We didn't really look like the rest of the bands that were up for the metal category," Matthewson conceded. "We don't necessarily wear the classic metal uniform. The mentality we have is different. There are a lot of people in (metal) that have that sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll mantra.

"We've always been on the nerdier side."

The Matthewson brothers formed KEN mode out of high school in 1999, while simultaneously aiming for careers that would financially support their musical passion.

For their first three albums, the balance worked, though their financial clients knew nothing of their heavy moonlighting. Bands they encountered were also in the dark, though they tended to come to a quick conclusion about the brothers.

"Yeah, that we're nerds," Matthewson said. "They would find out we're not all that 'fun' — I think we're fun, but we don't partake in a lot of the drug-doing that people equate with fun."

Around 2010, the Matthewsons put book-balancing on the back-burner and barrelled out onto the road full-time. Clearly, the decision paid dividends — the three albums they've released since have been more popular and all wrested Juno nominations, including another metal/hard music nomination at this year's ceremony.

"Usually you tour your butt off when you're young because you have nothing to lose — no kids, things don't hurt, it's OK if you're not making money," Jesse said. "Whereas we went to school, got jobs, then decided to quit the jobs. We were 30-year-olds."

Matthewson turns 35 this year, and suddenly, the prospect of sleeping on floors, subsisting on roadside fast food and cramping into a van for hours on end is less charming. "I'm no spring chicken anymore."

Well, just as the road became too taxing, the Matthewsons decided to reinvest some of their time.

The brothers are taking their parents' business, MKM Management Services, and rebranding it to provide accounting, tax and business-management services for artists, combining their two areas of expertise. They've always kept close tabs on their costs — Jesse mentions that the band spent $20,000 on gas in 2013, for instance — in a way other groups haven't.

Shane and Jesse have always felt that they didn't fit in anywhere — not in hard music, not among accountants. The new venture might bridge that gap, though the ever-dimensional Jesse also mentions that he's currently training for his first amateur kick-boxing fight on March 12.

In other words, KEN mode will probably always occupy a bracket all their own.

"We have a whole weird, wide set of interests," he said. "It's this weird cross-section of not really fitting in anywhere." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Your essential daily news

Trump to open swank D.C. hotel ahead of U.S. election

A princess in training

Sick of running through the sleet and snow? Then go to Disney. The company's resorts offer a number of marathons throughout the year to make running even more fun. Writer Jennifer White shares her last-minute prep for this weekend's Princess Run in Florida.

Jennifer White
Torstar News Service

Anything worth doing is worth doing poorly, in a rush, while complaining. As an Olympic-level procrastinator, this strategy has steered me through the most stressful of life experiences (ask me about my master's thesis one day).

But when I found myself a mere four weeks before the Feb. 21 half-marathon at Disney World with no significant training in months, I wanted to run. Away.

My knee injury (and IT band tightness and hip inflexibility and everything my Mamma gave me) had not just crimped my running-plan style, it had shrunk my training window to insignificance.

But after being poked, prodded, stretched, strengthened and, finally, braced, I was literally back on the road. I had no idea how to get where I wanted to be (again, uncannily like that thesis) and was desperate to find some way, any way, of making it to the finish line. Because what lay ahead could be a veritable Turducken of embarrassment; a lack of training wrapped in injury-plagued luck, nauseatingly stuffed inside a high-stakes social experiment that (apparently) people are reading about in a national newspaper.

I felt awesome. And by awesome I mean sick. That's when I called a Hail Mary. I scoured the Internet for tips from people who were underprepared to run such a distance, trying to find the best ways to do no harm to myself, finish in the upright position and still have enough gas in the tank for a few jars of celebratory ale at the finish line. After collating all of the best plans from the brightest running minds around, I whipped and frappéed them into the single-best Hail Mary running plan in the entire universe, the core principles of which boiled down to one guiding rule: Do Your Best.

My focus turned first to endurance. If I was going to have the fortitude to walk 21 kilometres, let alone run it, I needed to get my heart a-pumping again. Mondays were 30 minutes of medium-intensity intervals, combined with short bursts of powerful sprints in order to prepare best for the outlay of power necessary during the race. Wednesdays featured an "at-half-marathon-pace" run for 30 minutes. And the weekend heralded a slower-than-molasses long run where I would delicately plod my way through an increasingly mind-numbing distance until I either hit the magic 16-kilometre mark a week before the race, or crumpled into the fetal position.

But wait, there's more! Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays held a variety of Herculean tasks. This chocolate box of unlimited delights included cross-training, cycling, swimming and my personal (absolutely opposite of) favourite, yoga. On one particularly painful run, I wondered if this was all worth it. But while in the middle of a sprint, I took a moment and looked down at myself. I saw a strong, powerful woman. I saw that she was running her guts out in the middle of an Ontario winter. And I saw that she was dressed head-to-toe in her ridiculously elaborate Disney half-marathon costume, just to make sure it didn't chafe on the big day. If I can do what I've done while dressed as Ursula, the villainous sea-witch in The Little Mermaid, I can flipping do anything.

24K
The number of participants in the 2015 Disney Princess Half Marathon, making it one of the largest female-focused events in the U.S.

91.5%
Percentage of female participants in the Princess marathon

28
Number of countries runners come from

MARATHONS TO RUN FOR

Star Wars Half Marathon — The Dark Side
April 14-April 17, Walt Disney World Resort, Florida

Tinker Bell Half Marathon Weekend
May 5-May 8, Disneyland Resort, California

Disneyland Half Marathon Weekend
Sept. 1-Sept. 4

Disney Wine & Dine Half Marathon Weekend
Nov. 4-Nov. 5, Walt Disney World Resort, Florida

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4 ASIAN FESTIVALS THAT SHOULDN'T BE MISSED

A continent renowned for its beguiling array of cultures, Asia hosts a myriad of festivals. Each marked by their own traditions and activities, these annual celebrations make for wonderful tourist experiences. Whether water fighting in Thailand or sending lanterns afloat in Myanmar, you can take part in these festivals in 2016. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

1 Poya festival (Sri Lanka)

While many major festivals in Asia are annual, the Poya festivals in Sri Lanka coincide with **each full moon**, meaning they number at least a dozen per year. These Buddhist festivals are public holidays and derive from the belief that Buddha wanted his followers to carry out significant spiritual activities on the day of every full moon. Many worshippers don white clothing and visit Buddhist temples or shrines to join ceremonies and make offerings. There also are street parades involving music and children dressed in traditional costumes.

2 Songkran (Thailand)

Few festivals in Asia encourage the participation of tourists as readily as Thailand's nationwide Songkran water festival, which marks the Thai New Year on **April 13**. For three days each April, Thai cities, towns and villages switch into party mode as their streets swell with local and foreign revellers dousing each other with water. In the mornings, Thai people make offerings to monks at their local temple.

3 Bonalu (Hyderabad, India)

Smeared in body paint, men writhe and groan in an apparent state of trance. Next to them, a line of women wearing saris sway to music while balancing ornate pots upon their heads. This group forms a procession along the stone paths which lead through ancient Golkonda Fort. It is an elaborate and fascinating manner in which Hindus in this Indian city give thanks to the Goddess Mahakali **every July.**

4 Loi Krathong (Southeast Asia)

The serene experience of lighting a lantern and setting it floating down a river, across a lake, into the ocean or up into the sky is the key activity of this Buddhist festival that takes place on **Nov. 15.** The act of sending these decorated lanterns on their way symbolizes the disposal of one's bad luck for the previous year in order to start afresh and with hope. It is celebrated in Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, China and Vietnam.

TRAVEL NOTES CHARLIE CHAPLIN AND ZADAR, CROATIA

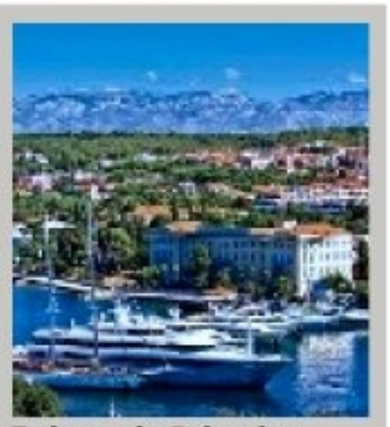
Charlie Chaplin museum to open

A museum showcasing the life and works of Charlie Chaplin will open at his former Swiss home in the village of Corsier-sur-Vevey in April after more than 15 years of planning, organizers say. Chaplin spent the last 25 years of his life in Switzerland after he was barred from the U.S. in the 1950s over suspicions that he had communist sympathies. AFP

Charlie Chaplin's last residence, the Manoir de Ban. AFP

Zadar, Croatia wins vote for best European destinations

The results of a public vote have crowned the city of Zadar on Croatia's Dalmatian coast Europe's best destination for 2016, a place Alfred Hitchcock called the home of the most beautiful sunset in the world. The waterfront town beat bigger, more cosmopolitan destinations like Paris, Rome and Madrid to take the top spot. AFP



Zadar, on the Dalmatian coast. ISTOCK

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David Price made his first big-money throws of spring training as Red Sox pitchers and catchers reported to Fort Myers, Fla.

SOCCER

Canadian women one win from Rio

Less than eight months after exiting the World Cup on home soil, Canada is poised to book its ticket Friday to the other major event of women's soccer — the Olympics.

Costa Rica stands in the way in the CONCACAF Women's Olympic Qualifying Championship semifinal. Ranked 34th in the world, the Ticas are seen as a team on the rise. Still, the 11th-ranked Canadians would seem a significant cut above.

The top-ranked U.S. will face No. 48 Trinidad & Tobago in the later semifinal Friday at BBVA Compass Stadium. Both semifinal winners qualify for the Olympics, where Canada won bronze four years ago.

Coach John Herdman anticipates the Costa Ricans parking the bus in front of their goal.

"We'd expect them to probably throw a deep block out there and ask Canada to come and break us down," he told the pre-match news conference. "We've had a lot of experience of that over the last three games — teams parking the bus and forcing us to be creative. So we're in a good rhythm in that sense."

If teams have parked the bus, they have left the windows and doors open.

Eleven different Canadians scored during the pool stage as Canada thumped No. 89 Guyana 5-0, Trinidad and Tobago 6-0 and No. 76 Guatemala 10-0.

27

Canada has outscored Costa Rica by 27 goals (30-3) in winning each of the nine matches between the two countries.

"That's the exciting part," said Herdman. "Everyone coming out of the World Cup hammered us because we couldn't score. We were one of the best defensive teams in the tournament. We didn't get enough credit for that I don't think but you never do for defending.

"I think we've got a new threat there," he said of his attack.

Canada scored four goals and conceded three in five games at the World Cup where it exited in a 2-1 quarter-final loss to England.

Costa Rica made its World Cup debut last summer tying Spain 1-1 and South Korea 2-2 before losing 1-0 to Brazil.

The Ticas, who have never reached the Olympics, advanced to Friday's semifinal by beating No. 108 Puerto Rico 9-0 and No. 26 Mexico 2-1 after an opening 5-0 loss to the U.S.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

John Herdman
THE CANADIAN PRESS

IN BRIEF

Earnhardt captures 17th Daytona checkered flag

Dale Earnhardt Jr. won the first qualifying race Thursday night for the Daytona 500 to earn a starting spot on the second row for NASCAR's biggest event.

It was Earnhardt's 17th career win at Daytona International Speedway, and came on the 15th anniversary of his father's death. The late Dale Earnhardt was killed on the final lap of the 2001 Daytona 500, and led all drivers with 34 career victories at Daytona. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Limping Manchester United rotten in Denmark

Manchester United's disappointing season hit a new low with a 2-1 loss at Danish champion FC Midtjylland in the Europa League last 32 on Thursday, with a pre-match injury to goalkeeper David de Gea adding to the fallen English giant's woes in the first leg.

United's injury list already contained 13 players, including Wayne Rooney, who missed the game after being ruled out this week with a knee injury. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Jets' Bryan Little is attended to by a trainer after he received a hit from Anton Stralman of the Lightning on Thursday night in Tampa, Fla. MIKE CARLSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stamkos, Lightning shoot down Jets

NHL

Winnipeg's Little leaves game after hit to his head

THURSDAY In Tampa

6	5
LIGHTNING	JETS

Steven Stamkos scored in the fifth round of the shootout and the Tampa Bay Lightning rebounded after blowing a three-goal lead to beat the Winnipeg Jets 6-5 on Thursday night.

The Lightning won the shootout 2-1.

Tampa Bay got regulation goals from Stamkos, Victor Hedman, Jonathan Marchessault, Alex Killorn and Nikita Kucherov.

Andrew Ladd had two goals for the Jets, who trailed 4-1 early in the third. Tyler Myers, Mark Scheifele and Mathieu Perreault had the other Winnipeg goals.

Winnipeg's Bryan Little was hurt late in the second period and needed assistance off the ice before heading to the locker-room. It appeared Hedman made contact in the neutral zone with Little, who looked like he lost his balance and lowered his head before getting hit by Anton Stralman.

There was no other information immediately available about Little, who didn't return.

Blake Wheeler went after Stralman and was given four minutes for roughing. Stralman got a two-minute roughing penalty.

It was announced at the start of the third period that Jets coach Paul Maurice, who had a heated discussion with officials after the Little play, had been given a game misconduct. A minor penalty to the Winnipeg bench was assessed in the second period.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CURLING

Hair broom use limited at Scotties, Brier

Sensing trouble ahead for the season's marquee curling events, Curling Canada is limiting the use of hair brooms at the Canadian women's and men's curling championships.

The governing body of the sport in Canada announced Thursday that only skips and vice-skips in the house can use hair brooms and only to sweep stones that have moved beyond the tee-line. The tee-line bisects the rings in the house horizontally.

"Everybody had the same goal of protecting the spirit and integrity of the game, and making sure the playing field is level for all of our teams. Gerry Peckham of Curling Canada

Skips will also be allowed to use hair brooms to sweep tick shots attempted on guards in front of the house.

But after the rock is delivered and as it glides the length of the ice, it can only be swept with fabric broom heads.

A resurgence in the use of hair brooms, which were introduced to the sport in the 1980s, is a by-product of a ban on fabric broomheads with "artificially textured" cloth and hard inserts.

Sweeping with the banned brooms manipulates the trajectory of a rock in unprecedented ways because of the scratches those broomheads inflict on the ice.

The World Curling Federation declared a moratorium on "directional fabric" brooms in November with Curling Canada following suit. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Shamrock, Gracie renew 20-year rivalry

MMA

Veterans that helped sport grow set to for another fight

Ken Shamrock is ready to throw in the towel. He concedes he can't beat Royce Gracie.

"I can't run 20 miles," Shamrock said, laughing. "I can't beat him in a long-distance mile. I'd probably go two miles and be done."

Forget 20 miles, Shamrock and Gracie can boast of a long-distance MMA rivalry that has spanned more than 20 years and multiple organizations.

They are MMA cornerstones that lugged the sport out of the days of cock-fighting comparisons and into one of the biggest, baddest mainstream sports around. Shamrock and Gracie had two fights to remember.

The third fight might be the one that decides if there's still drawing and punching power left in the once fearsome fighters. Or if this upcoming bout is nothing more than a foolish cash-grab embarrassment for two men well past MMA retirement age.

Royce Gracie and Ken Shamrock, top, fight during UFC 1 in Denver in November 1993. HOLLY STEIN/GETTY IMAGES

Gracie returns to the ring for the first time in almost a decade to fight Shamrock at Bellator 149 Friday night in Houston. The records matter less than the ages: Shamrock turned 52 last week and Gracie is 49. They clashed at UFC 1 on Nov. 12, 1993. "Why are people so afraid of me fighting at my age when the reality of the situation is, it's about dollars?" Shamrock said. "It's about doing what I love to do and getting paid for it."

Royce Gracie GETTY IMAGES

Few would have predicted in '93 that Shamrock, Gracie and even MMA would have thrived well into the 21st century.

Gracie choked out Shamrock 57 seconds into the first bout at UFC 1. Before main events were short enough to fit into Vines, the second meeting at UFC 5 on April 7, 1995, was a draw in a bout that lasted a whopping 36 minutes, with no round breaks .

Shamrock and Gracie would become the first UFC Hall of Famers. "He's the reason I was able to rise to the level that I rose," Shamrock said. "He was where I had to be in order to be the best in the world."

Gracie said he'll fight at the same 180-pound weight he fought at in UFC 1.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Cavs acquire Frye in trade

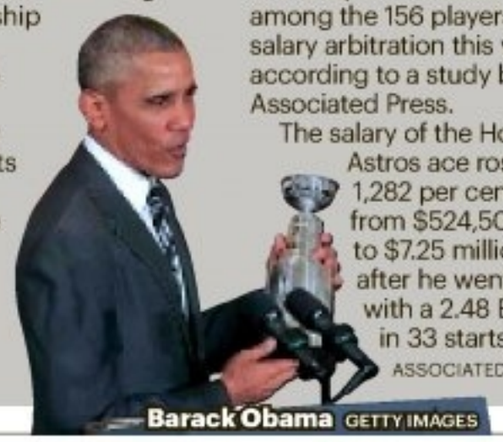
The Cavaliers found a coveted wing shooter before the trading deadline.

Adding another scoring threat for star LeBron James, the Cavs acquired forward Channing Frye from the Orlando Magic on Thursday in exchange for centre Anderson Varejao, two people with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Obama fetes Blackhawks

U.S. President Barack Obama celebrated his hometown Chicago Blackhawks for winning another Stanley Cup, calling the team's third title in six years an "amazing championship run."

Chicago defeated Tampa Bay last June. Its previous titles came in 2010 and 2013. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Barack Obama GETTY IMAGES

Spieth sputters in L.A.

Jordan Spieth was everywhere he wasn't supposed to be at Riviera and wound up with a 79 in the Northern Trust Open.

Spieth called it a day to forget. It was his worst score since an 80 in the 2014 Tour Championship.

For Camilo Villegas, it was a day to savour. The Colombian ran off four straight birdies late in his round and challenged the course record until a bogey on his final hole for a 63. He led Bubba Watson, Chez Reavie and Luke List by three shots. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Keuchel's raise biggest

AL Cy Young Award winner Dallas Keuchel received the steepest increase among the 156 players in salary arbitration this year, according to a study by The Associated Press.

The salary of the Houston Astros ace rose 1,282 per cent, from $524,500 to $7.25 million, after he went 20-8 with a 2.48 ERA in 33 starts. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RECIPE Egg Bakes

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

These egg bakes take your easy scrambled eggs and toast dinner to the next level with only a little extra effort. And they're cute too.

Ready in
Prep time: 10 minutes
Total time: 30 minutes

Makes: 4 egg cups

Ingredients
- 4 slices of wholegrain bread
- 2 Tbsp butter, softened
- 4 eggs
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

1. Heat the oven to 375 F.

2. Trim the crusts off of your bread. Use a rolling pin to flatten them and butter both sides of each piece. Press each thin slice into a muffin tin.

3. Bake in the oven for 10 minutes, or until the bread is golden brown. Remove from oven and place muffin tin on a cookie sheet — it will make getting your finished eggs out of the oven easier. Now crack an egg into each nest and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

4. Place it back into the oven for about 20 minutes, you want the yolks and whites to set but not get too hard. Remove from the oven and use a butter knife to pry egg bakes out of the muffin tin. Serve with a side salad.

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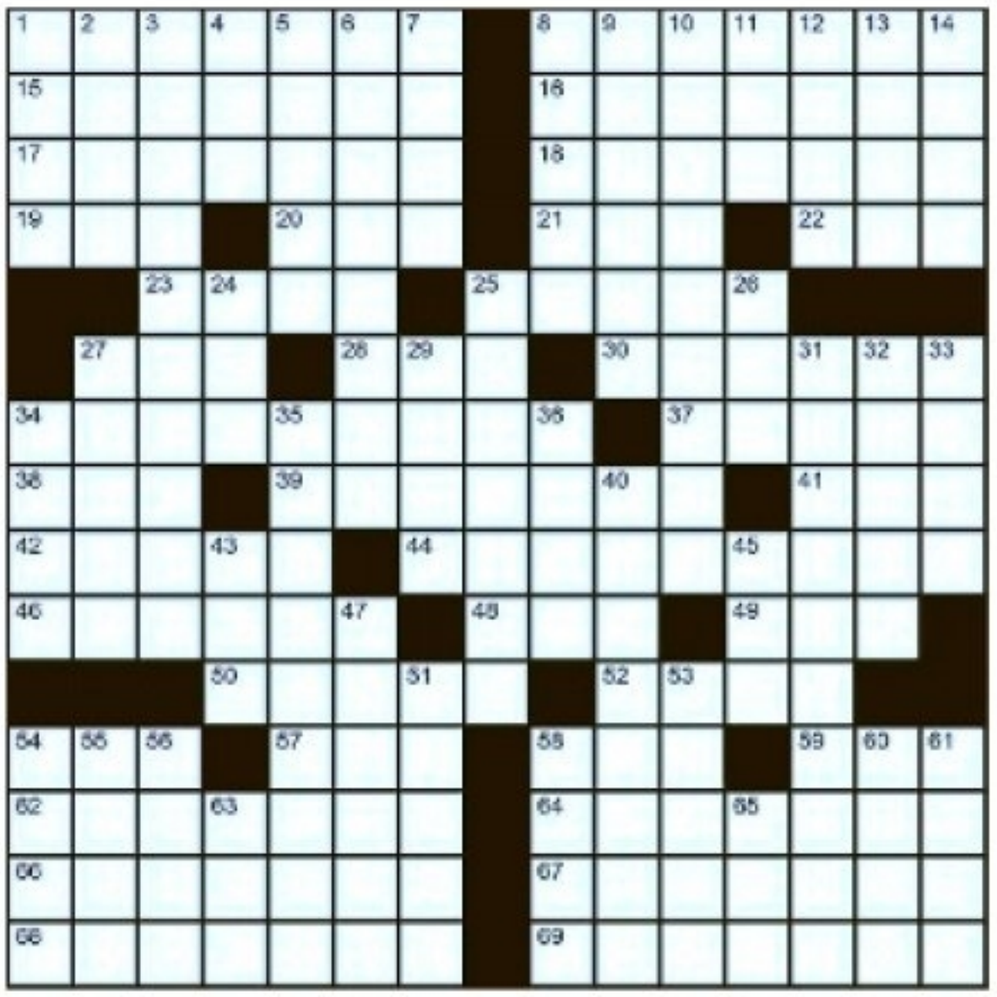
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. 1918 Montreal-to-Toronto: _ JN-4 'Canuck' (Plane used for Canada's first official aerial mail delivery)
8. Purplish red
15. Nose spray brand
16. Resistance to action
17. CRA = Canada _ Agency
18. Cushion decorations
19. Opposite NNW
20. 'Lact' suffix
21. Bitty Brit band
22. Gathered
23. Pro _ (Proportionately)
25. Febreze-using reason
27. Tricky
28. Discontinuity
30. Sharp-tailed _ (Saskatchewan's provincial bird)
34. 'Psst'-ing person
37. Poem comprised of lines from other poems
38. Basketball great, _ Ming
39. Ridiculous
41. Bamboozle
42. Optimist's opposer
44. 'Central' and 'Atlantic' in the National Basketball League of Canada
46. Ottawa-born singer/songwriter, _ Chante
48. Bird beak
49. Theatrical prompt
50. Q. "Kermit, the Muppets character, what is he?" A. "_ _."
52. Radar signal
54. Extinct bird
57. Lithium-_ battery
58. Conrad of Bravo police drama "19-2"
59. Pot cover
62. Indirect/slanting
64. Dinner party guest's gift, perhaps: 2 wds.
66. American roots music band that played with Jefferson Airplane: 2 wds.
67. Seventh or eleventh, for example
68. Ranks the tennis players again
69. Allocates

DOWN
1. 'Burned' computer discs, commonly
2. Scottish musician Midge's
3. Niagara _ _ (National Basketball League of Canada team)
4. Blood-sucking bug's half
5. "Is _ _ over yet?" (That game is still in overtime?)
6. Products by Canadian food brand Schneiders
7. Snick-or-_
8. Referenced
9. _ clock
10. Natural _ Canada
11. "_, Doubtfire" (1993)
12. Detail
13. World's longest river
14. The Middle _
24. Group of Seven painter Mr. Jackson, et al.
25. New store's 'grand' event
26. Deer sort
27. "Happy Baby" Canadian music trio
29. Dry
31. Gwyneth and Chris made headlines when they were 'conscious' about it
32. Masonry material
33. Long times
34. Klee _ (Emily Carr book)
35. West coast water ...en francais
36. Cleave
40. Rabbits whilst eating
43. Smashing Pumpkins co-founder James
45. Henri's 'here'
47. More or less
51. Q. "Did U2 release '_' _ a single in 1992?" A. "Yes."
53. Cheryl and Diane
54. Jay of "Jerry Maguire" (1996)
55. Orchestra instrument
56. Mountain heights [abbr.]
58. Malayan sailing boat
60. _ _ uproar
61. Rocker Mr. Shannon's
63. 'Favour' finisher
65. Nintendo game console

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
The next few weeks won't be easy but try not to make them harder than they have to be. A lot will depend on your attitude, especially your willingness to rise to a challenge rather than be intimidated by it.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
The Sun in Pisces will boost your self-esteem and bring you into contact with people whose ideals mirror your own. But being challenged will inspire you to fight all the harder.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
This is an important time for career. You'll get opportunities to show what you can do. Seize them. If you let them pass you by they won't come around again for a long time.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
The Sun's change of signs will lead to a broadening of your horizons. Ideas that never meant much to you in the past will capture your imagination.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
It is unlikely you will be satisfied with superficial answers. You want — no you demand — to know what is going on beneath the surface and behind the scenes.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Look for ways to co-operate with others today and over the weekend. Remember, too, that everyone has a good side and a bad side but the good side is always stronger, especially if it is given encouragement. Let people know you like them.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
You dislike it when unexpected events disturb your methods and habits but that's too bad because there will be severe disruptions over the next few days. Don't get uptight, in the long-term it will do you good.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
The Sun moves into the most dynamic area of your chart today and soon you will be moving so fast you will have trouble catching your breath. If you make an extra effort now you will reap rewards down the road.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
It may seem as if the whole world is against you but nothing could be further from the truth. You are simply more touchy than usual. Stay calm.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You will be on the move a lot over the next few weeks but today it will pay you to stay where you are. An extremely busy phase is about to begin and once you start you won't want, or be able, to stop.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
The focus of your life is about to change, maybe a little, maybe a lot. One thing that will change is your finances which have been less than healthy. Essentials only from now on!

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
The time has come to show the world what you can do. You won't lack for energy or enthusiasm, so use them to pursue excellence in everything you do. You'll dazzle!

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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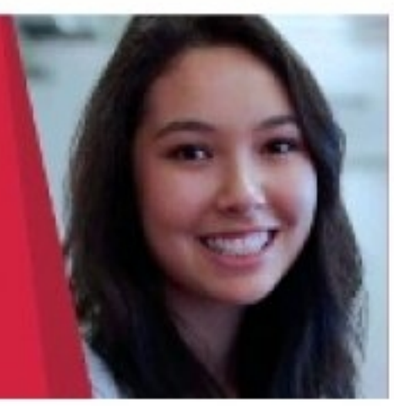
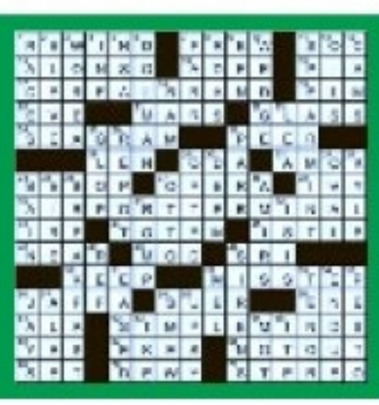


YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

Your daily crossword and Sudoku answers from the play page.

for more fun and games go to metronews.ca/games



3	7	8	5	1	4	2	6	9
5	2	9	3	7	6	8	4	1
4	6	1	9	2	8	5	7	3
1	4	5	2	8	9	6	3	7
6	8	3	1	5	7	9	2	4
2	9	7	4	6	3	1	8	5
7	3	2	8	9	5	4	1	6
8	5	4	6	3	1	7	9	2
9	1	6	7	4	2	3	5	8

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Offer includes freight and air tax but excludes PST & GST
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WAS: $40,649
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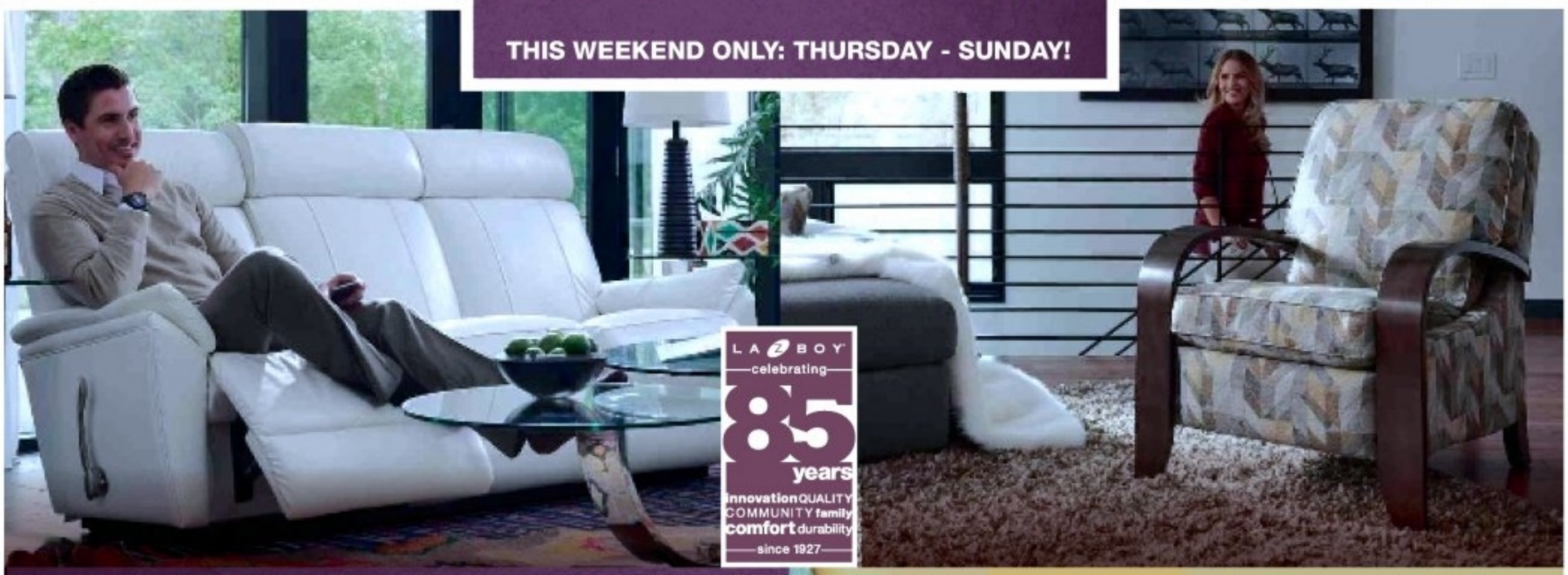

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